

Ottoman-Era Documents from the Cairo Genizah

JANE HATHAWAY



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

Faculty of Asian and Middle
Eastern Studies

Cambridge Semitic Languages and Cultures

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OTTOMAN-ERA
DOCUMENTS FROM THE
CAIRO GENIZAH

Ottoman-Era Documents from the Cairo Genizah

Jane Hathaway

*With the assistance of Alan Elbaum and
Christopher Whitehead*





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<https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0502#resources>

Semitic Languages and Cultures 43

ISSN (print): 2632-6906

ISBN Paperback: 978-1-80511-758-2

ISSN (digital): 2632-6914

ISBN Hardback: 978-1-80511-759-9

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978-1-80511-760-5

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0502

Cover image: Cornelis de Bruijn, 'Cairo', *Voyage au Levant* (Paris: Guillaume Cavelier, 1714). Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cairo_-_Bruyn_Cornelis_De_-_1714.jpg. Public domain.

Cover design: Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal

The fonts used in this volume are Charis SIL, Scheherazade New and SBL Hebrew.

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GENIZAH COLLECTION ABBREVIATIONS

AIU	Alliance Israélite Universelle, Paris
BL Or.	British Library, Oriental Collection
Bodl. MS heb.	Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Hebrew Manuscripts Collection
CAJS Halper	Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, University of Pennsylvania, Halper Collection
CUL Or.	Cambridge University Library, Oriental Collection
ENA	Elkan Nathan Adler Collection, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York
JRL Gaster	John Rylands Research Institute and Library, University of Manchester, Gaster Collection
Manchester	John Rylands Research Institute and Library, University of Manchester
Mosseri	Jacques Mosseri Genizah Collection, Cambridge University Library
NLI MS Ar.	National Library of Israel, Arabic Manuscripts Collection
Rylands Genizah Fragment	John Rylands Research Institute and Library, University of Manchester, Genizah Fragment Collection
T-S	Taylor-Schechter Collection, Cambridge University Library
T-S Ar.	Taylor-Schechter Arabic
T-S NS	Taylor-Schechter New Series

PREFACE

This book would not have been possible without Professor Marina Rustow, the director of Princeton University's Geniza Project. Back in 2016, when I attended the opening of the relocated Princeton Geniza Lab, she encouraged my then-very tentative project of investigating the Ottoman-era Genizah corpus. She also used the occasion to 'out' me as one of the Princeton Near Eastern Studies graduate students who typed Genizah documents into a database in the late 1980s. That long-ago experience was my first exposure to the Genizah, and it, in turn, would not have been possible without Professor Mark R. Cohen, who directed the minor field on Jews under Muslim rule, with an emphasis on the Genizah, that I prepared for my PhD candidacy exams at Princeton.

I launched this project in 2020–21 with a Faculty Professional Leave from the College of Arts and Sciences at Ohio State University and a fellowship from the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies. I am grateful to Professor Scott Levi, chair of Ohio State's Department of History, and to Ohio State's College of Arts and Sciences for supporting my research leave. I also thank the director of the BCDSS, Professor Stephan Conermann, for supporting my application and the staff of the BCDSS for providing a welcoming scholarly environment even when the COVID pandemic meant that I had to hold the fellowship remotely. I welcomed the opportunity to present preliminary results of my research to the BCDSS; the Skilliter Centre for Otto-

man Studies, University of Cambridge; the Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies Seminar, University of Michigan; the Princeton Near Eastern Studies faculty seminar; the annual conference of the Middle East Studies Association; the Centre for Anatolian and East Mediterranean Studies, University of St Andrews; the 'Halcyon Days in Crete XII' conference, sponsored by the Foundation for Research and Technology–Hellas at the Institute for Mediterranean Studies in Rethymno, Crete; and the Middle East and South Asia Studies Program, Department of History, Department for the Study of Religions, Jewish Studies Program, and Humanities Institute at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, NC. Funding for production costs and research assistance was provided by Ohio State's Emeritus Academy. Ms Laura Seeger, the Digital Media and Learning Systems Specialist in Ohio State's Department of History, provided invaluable help in preparing the maps for this volume.

I owe huge debts of gratitude to five scholars who reviewed my transcriptions and translations and offered valuable corrections and suggestions. Dr Alan Elbaum painstakingly reviewed the Arabic-language documents and steered me toward primary and secondary sources of whose existence I would otherwise have been unaware. His palaeographic skills are extraordinary, as is the range of his knowledge. My former PhD advisee Dr Christopher Whitehead reviewed most of the Ottoman Turkish documents; I will always be grateful for the calm collegiality with which he dispatched this task. My former Ohio State colleague Professor Victoria Holbrook guided me through the Sufi poetry that comprises Chapter 5, Document 6, with crucial input from

Professor Mücahit Kaçar of Istanbul University. Professor Dotan Arad of Bar-Ilan University graciously proofread my transcriptions and translations of the bits of Hebrew and Judeo–Arabic text scattered among these documents; in a couple of cases, acknowledged in the footnotes, he provided the transcriptions and translations himself. Ever since I launched this project, he has answered numerous questions related to the Ottoman-era documents and has been exceptionally generous with his own research and insights.

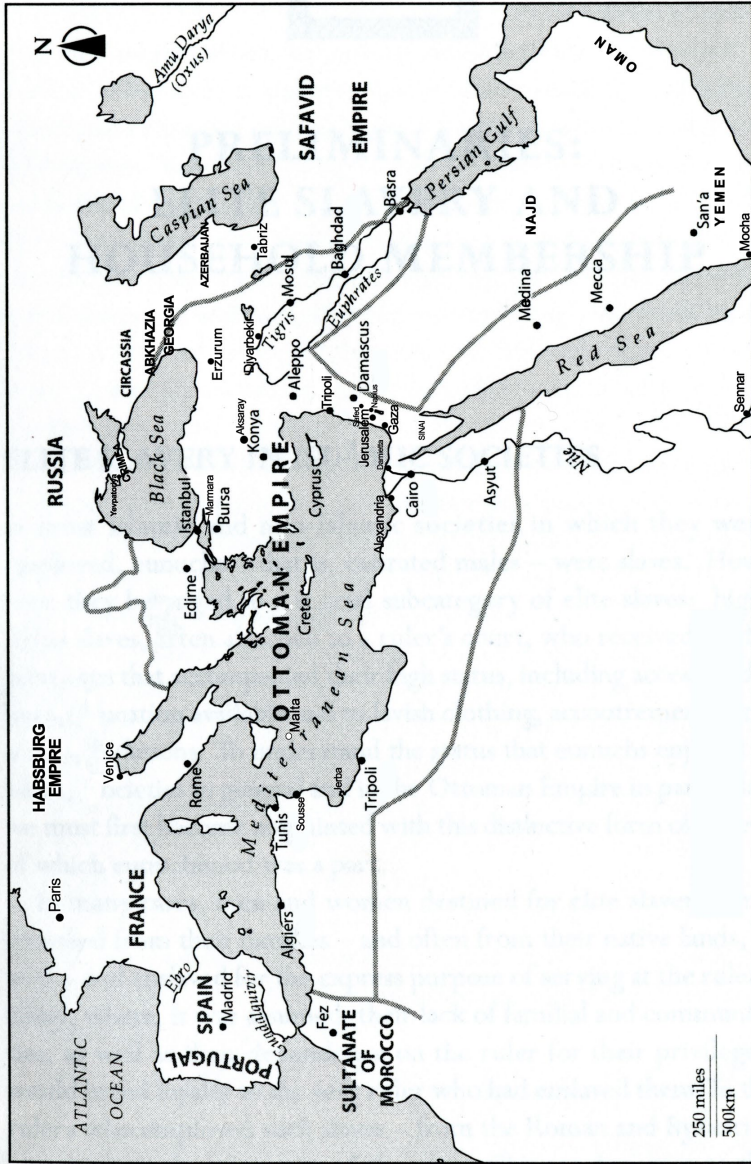
Other colleagues supplied input on a variety of topics related to the documents; they include Dr Guy Burak, Dr Matthew Dudley, and Professors Tamer El-Leithy, Elena Frangakis-Syrett, Daniel Frank, Tijana Krstić, Benjamin Lellouch, David Powers, and Warren Schultz. Responsibility for any errors is, naturally, entirely mine. I have acknowledged assistance with issues related to specific documents in the footnotes to the transcriptions. If I have inadvertently neglected to thank anyone who assisted me, a faulty memory alone is to blame.

Professor Geoffrey Khan, the editor of *Cambridge Semitic Languages and Cultures*, has been a source of vital advice and wise counsel since I first began to consider publication venues for this volume. I will always be grateful for his rapid responses to my many queries and the patient collegiality with which he guided me through the formatting and manuscript submission processes. I also thank the readers of the book manuscript for CSLC, Professor Dotan Arad and Professor Esther-Miriam Wagner (Cambridge). Special thanks go to Dr Arthur Kiron of the Univer-

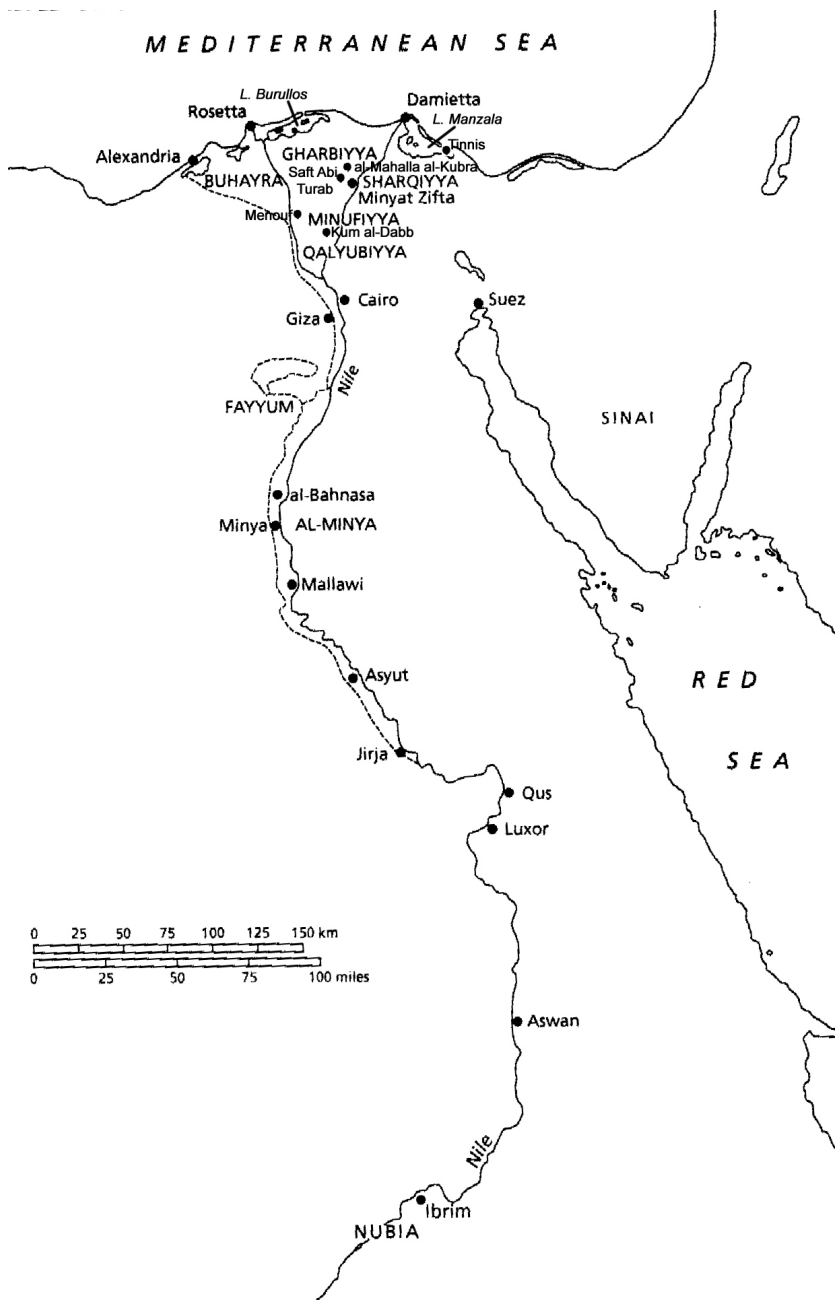
sity of Pennsylvania Libraries, Dr Ben Outhwaite of the Cambridge University Libraries, Ms Lisa Risbec of the John Rylands Research Institute and Library, University of Manchester, and Dr Jean-Claude Kuperminc, Mme Véronique Fekete, and M. Jean-Pierre Riom of the library of the Alliance Israélite Universelle for their help in acquiring images of the documents included in this collection, as well as Professor Aron Rodrigue of Stanford University for putting me in touch with Dr Kuperminc.

Lastly, I thank the two other members of my household, Bob and Tasha, as well as Tasha's late, much-missed sister Pelin, for their unflagging support.

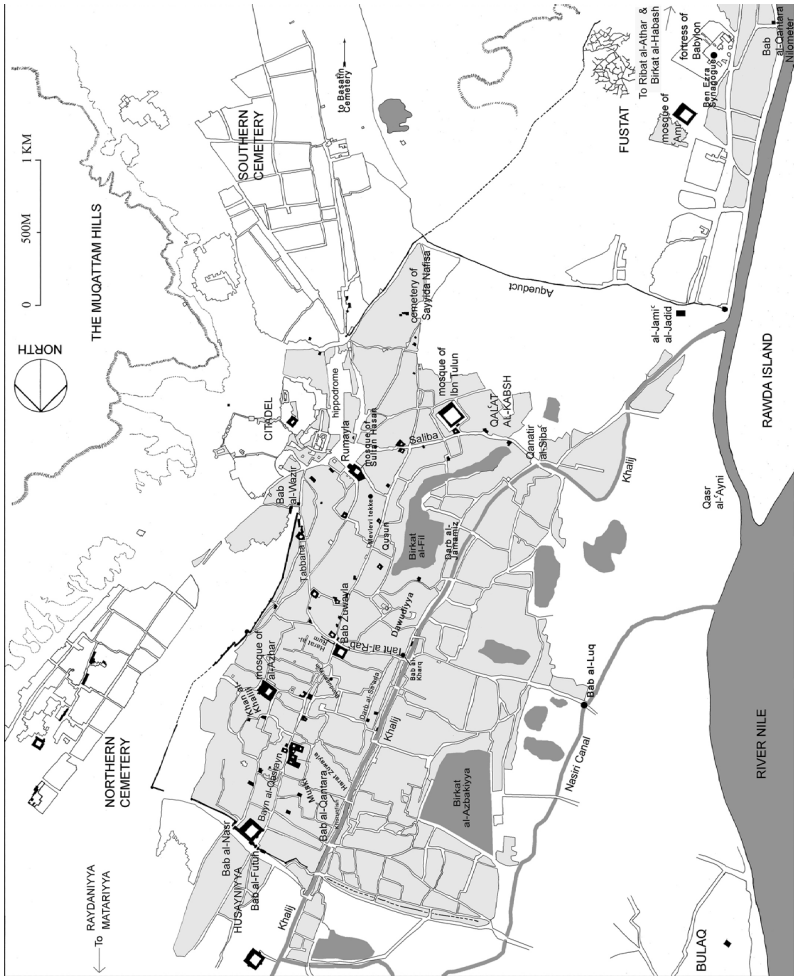
Map 1. The Ottoman Empire in the mid-sixteenth century (Hathaway 2018a, xv, modified)



Map 2. Egypt in the Ottoman era (Hathaway 2018a, 166, modified)



Map 3. Cairo in the Ottoman era (Hathaway 2018a, 174, modified)



INTRODUCTION

1.0. The Cairo Genizah

1.1. The Basics

The documents in this collection come from a repository known as the Cairo Genizah. The Genizah was long assumed to comprise documents, related to Egypt's Jewish community, that were housed in a special storeroom in the Ben Ezra Synagogue, an ancient house of worship for Rabbanite Jews of the Palestinian rite located in Fustāṭ, today a southern neighbourhood of Cairo.¹ The concept of a genizah, however, is by no means exclusive to Cairo or to Egypt. A genizah is a repository for worn or damaged Jewish liturgical texts and objects, which, since they contain the name of God or allusions to him, cannot be destroyed. The word, as S.D. Goitein (1967, 1) pointed out, derives from the ancient Persian term for a treasure (*ganj*), yet it already appears with its current form in the Mishnah and the Babylonian Talmud, where it connotes a process of 'hiding away', which at the time was usually interpreted to mean burial (m. Shabbat 16, 1; b. Megilla 26^b). Even today, many synagogues have specially designated storage spaces for worn scriptural and related materials, the contents of which they empty and bury every few years in a 'paper grave' in a nearby cemetery (Klass 2022; Mukherjee 2022). This was also the practice in the pre-modern Mediterranean region, including

¹ Goitein (1967, 1–2); Hopkins (1981); Reif (2000); Hoffman and Cole (2011).

Egypt. The Ben Ezra Synagogue's storeroom, however, was unique in accumulating materials for several centuries without being emptied, then apparently being sealed (Jefferson 2018, 426–27, 433–35, 441–42, 446).

In the 1890s, the Ben Ezra Synagogue's storeroom was opened and emptied, and its contents, along with those of other *genizot* and synagogues in the vicinity (see below), were dispersed to numerous collections in Europe and North America (Jefferson 2022, esp. chaps. 6–15). For over 125 years, these document collections have constituted the Cairo Genizah. The documents range chronologically from the late tenth through the late nineteenth century CE and take the form of everything from biblical and Talmudic manuscripts to liturgical poetry to business letters, Jewish and Muslim court cases, marriage contracts, petitions to rulers, and charity lists. The majority are composed in Judeo–Arabic—that is, Arabic written in Hebrew script—but literary works in particular are often written in Hebrew while official documents are often written in Arabic. In documents from the Ottoman period, Hebrew and Ladino (Judeo–Spanish) feature in letters while a small number of official documents are composed in Ottoman Turkish (Goitein 1967, 2–23; Arad 2017b; Hathaway 2022b).

1.2. The Cairo Genizah as an Historical Source

What has made the Cairo Genizah such a rich source for historical research is the light its documents shed on the literary, social, and economic history of the Jewish population of Egypt and the

broader Mediterranean over this thousand-year period.² That said, the bulk of Genizah scholarship has concentrated on the period when the Ben Ezra Synagogue was the hub of Egypt's Jewish life, between the eleventh and early thirteenth centuries; during that time, it was the seat of the leader of Egypt's entire Jewish community, known as the *Ra'īs al-Yahūd* (Goitein 1971, 23–40; Cohen 1980, esp. chaps. 3–8). In the late twelfth century, the great rabbi–philosopher Moses Maimonides (529–600 AH/1135–1204 CE) assumed the office, which his descendants held for over 200 years; numerous manuscripts by Maimonides and other holders of the office survived in the Genizah synagogue.³ Letters of influential overseas merchants were also found, such as those of Joseph ibn ʿAwkāl, who was active in the first half of the eleventh century,⁴ and Nahray ibn Nissīm, who was active in the second half of the same century.⁵ Likewise preserved in the repository were court cases heard by the Jewish court (*bet dīn*) based in the synagogue.⁶

² Goitein (1967, 23–27); Cohen (2005b, 8–16); Rustow (2020, 23–34).

³ Goitein (1963; 1967, 95, 97, 122, Fig. 7; 1971, 37, 95–96, 252–53; 1980, 158–59; 1983, 36; 1988, 27, 54–55); Cohen (2005a).

⁴ Goitein (1967, 158, 163–64, 165–66, 168–69, 215–16, 225–26, 227, 232); Stillman (1973).

⁵ Goitein (1967, 8, 54, 61, 153–55, 156, 158, 172, 189, 232, 240, 247–48).

⁶ Goitein (1967, 10–11, 15, 177–83, 362–67, Fig. 5; 1971, 33–34, 153, 268, 311–27; 1978, 96–99, 282, 289, 294, 348–50; 1983, aps. A–D; 1988, 487–88).

1.3. Medieval vs. Early Modern Documents

During the later Crusades, much of Fustāṭ was reduced to ruins. Consequently, the Jewish population migrated north to Cairo proper, ultimately concentrating in the neighbourhood of Ḥārat Zuwayla. Far fewer Genizah documents survive from the fourteenth century through the late nineteenth century: of some 400,000 total Genizah documents, only about 40,000, at an extremely rough estimate, date from these six later centuries (Rustow, personal communication). Linguistically and paleographically, these later documents tend to be more challenging than the medieval corpus; those composed in Judeo-Arabic, Hebrew, or Ladino are often written in eccentric Hebrew hands that are notoriously difficult to decipher. This is one reason that late Mamluk- and Ottoman-era documents remain woefully understudied.

Another, perhaps somewhat paradoxical, reason for this relative neglect of the late Mamluk- and Ottoman-era Genizah corpus is that a wider variety of narrative and archival sources exists for this later period. European travellers' accounts of Egypt and Greater Syria proliferate beginning in the fifteenth century and, by the eighteenth century, are fairly abundant in numerous languages (e.g., Carlier de Pinon [sixteenth century], *Relation*; Pococke [1704–65], *Description*). These supplement the accounts of trans-regional Muslim travellers such as that of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (703–78 AH/1304–77 CE) in the late fourteenth century and, in the seventeenth century, the incomparable ten-volume opus of the Ottoman courtier Evliyā Çelebi (ca. 1019–93 AH/1611–82 CE), the tenth volume of which is devoted to Egypt, Sudan, and

the Horn of Africa (Ibn Baṭūṭa, *Riḥla*; Evliyā, *Seyāhatnāme*). Where the Jewish community specifically is concerned, the reports of Jewish travellers from the Mediterranean region provide rare insight (e.g., *Jewish Travellers*; Obadiah [late fifteenth century], *Travel Letters* (English); Obadiah, *Travel Letters* (Hebrew)). More fundamentally, rabbinical responsa, already an important source for the medieval period (e.g., Lieberman 2017, 2021), become a vital source for social, economic, and legal history during the Ottoman era.⁷

Beginning in the mid-sixteenth century, furthermore, Ottoman archival documents of all kinds become readily available for Egypt and Greater Syria, in stark contrast to the extreme scarcity of archival documents for earlier periods. These documents comprise sultanic decrees, complaints and petitions to the sultan, land tenure and taxation registers, military salary registers, pious endowment deeds, estate inventories, and records of Muslim court cases. While specimens of all these genres of document can be found in Ottoman Turkish, the Ottoman central authority's administrative language (Genç et al. 2010),⁸ examples of the last

⁷ E.g., Goodblatt (1952); Goldman (1970); Shmuelovitz (1984); Shtober (1989); Goldish (2008); Lellouch (2024, 41).

⁸ Following the restructuring of the Turkish government in 2018, the name of the archive was changed from Başbakanlık Arşivi (Prime Ministry Archives) to Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, Ministry of State Archives, Ottoman Archive).

three categories from the empire's Arab provinces are also abundant in Arabic (Raymond 1973–74, I:xxi–xxxi).⁹ In fact, some of the Ottoman-era Genizah documents transcribed here are copies of Ottoman documents generated in the imperial capital, as well as court cases from *shari'a* courts in Egypt. This reality reflects an increasing interplay between the Genizah corpus and the archives of the ruling state during the Ottoman period.

1.4. Changes in Genizah Scholarship

Genizah documents of the 'classical' era have formed the basis of impressive works of scholarship for over 100 years. Hundreds of important publications have been authored by legendary eminences such as Solomon Schechter (1847–1915), Jacob Mann (1888–1940), and S.D. Goitein (1900–85),¹⁰ and by currently and recently active scholars such as Mark R. Cohen, Stefan Reif, Geoffrey Khan, Marina Rustow, and Eve Krakowski.¹¹ Apart from pioneering work by Avraham David (e.g., David 1972, 1985, 1988), the Ottoman-era corpus has begun to attract serious scholarly attention only in the past fifteen to twenty years. (It is true, however, that in 1972, S.D. Goitein, at the request of Gabriel

⁹ The locations of some collections have changed since this work's initial publication. Most notably, the Egyptian National Archives moved some years ago to a complex along the Nile in Būlāq, adjacent to the National Library.

¹⁰ E.g., Schechter (1910); Mann (1970); Goitein (1967, 1971, 1978, 1983, 1988).

¹¹ E.g., Cohen (2005a–b); Reif (2002); Khan (1993); Rustow (2008); Krakowski (2018).

Baer, published a transcription and translation, without commentary, of a seventeenth-century Geniza document; Goitein 1972). Today, a small but growing number of scholars, including Avraham David, Dotan Arad, Esther-Miriam Wagner, and Geoffrey Khan, are producing cutting-edge scholarship that sheds new light on, for example, the nature of the Jewish community in Ottoman Cairo, the use of pious endowments by the Jewish community, the office of Raʿīs al-Yahūd in the last decades of the Mamluk Sultanate, the relationship between Jews in Egypt and Greater Syria during the Ottoman era, and the languages used by Jews in Ottoman Egypt.¹² If the number of publications based on the Ottoman-era documents may never equal the mass of scholarship on the medieval Geniza, the number of both scholars and publications is nonetheless steadily growing. With the present collection of documents, I hope to make a modest contribution to this salutary trend while also showing how a thorough grounding in Ottoman history and institutions can aid in the interpretation of Ottoman-era Genizah documents.

The publication of these documents comes at a pivotal time for scholarship on the Cairo Genizah, whether ‘classical’ or early modern. A growing variety of documents are coming under scrutiny, and remarkable new technologies are being employed to decipher and study them. Both these developments owe much to the unprecedented availability of Genizah document images via the internet, as well as the possibilities that the internet has in-

¹² E.g., David (2007, 2016a–c); Arad (2011, 2017b–c, 2023); Khan (2013); Wagner (2021); Dudley (2024); Arad and Wagner (2025).

troduced for scholarly consultation and collaboration. Particularly notable among digital databases and research fora are the Friedberg Jewish Manuscript Society/Cairo Genizah, a repository of images and catalogue data for all known Genizah documents, available to virtually all researchers (currently in the process of migrating to the KTIV platform of the National Library of Israel website); the University of Cambridge's Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit, which links to an enormous digital library of documents from the Taylor-Schechter, Jacques Mosseri, and Lewis-Gibson collections, along with research tools and project reports; Princeton University's Princeton Geniza Project and Princeton Geniza Lab, home to an array of research resources, including digital images of S.D. Goitein's research notes; and the University of Haifa's Centre for Interdisciplinary Research of the Cairo Genizah.¹³

Beyond all these advances in research, however, the fundamental nature of the collection that we know as the Cairo Genizah has attracted new scrutiny. A recent book and several articles by Rebecca J. W. Jefferson have pointed out the chaotic nature of the document collection's discovery by European and American antiquarians in the last decades of the nineteenth century and its eventual removal, in the late 1890s, from Cairo to various collections in Europe and North America, most notably, of course, to the University of Cambridge. While interest on the part of Orientalists in the *genizot* of numerous Cairo synagogues had been steadily growing in the second half of the nineteenth

¹³ Web addresses and links are provided in the Bibliography.

century, the Ben Ezra Synagogue's 1889–92 renovation—under the auspices of the British administration that had governed Egypt since 1882—triggered the wholesale relocation of the mass of documents after the Ben Ezra's unique second-storey storeroom was emptied and rebuilt.

This storeroom, probably added during an eleventh-century reconstruction, was, Jefferson observes, apparently used as a repository-cum-archive not only for Jewish liturgical texts and literary works but for the papers of important merchant families and the like before being sealed in either the late Mamluk or the early Ottoman period. During the renovation, it was broken open and its contents exposed to the elements for some weeks before being moved to temporary storage until the renovation was completed in 1892. During this time, the storeroom's contents mixed with a welter of additional documents transported from other synagogues and from cemeteries, most notably the Basātīn Cemetery, located southeast of Fuṣṭāṭ, before the entire lot was transferred to a damp basement location in 1892. Thus the documents that Solomon Schechter encountered toward the end of 1896 and transported to Cambridge over the next two to three years, as well as those that eventually came to reside in numerous other collections in the United Kingdom, continental Europe, and the United States, comprised a hodgepodge of documents from the Ben Ezra storeroom, the Basātīn Cemetery, and numerous other cemeteries and synagogues, notably Cairo's Karaite synagogue (Jefferson 2018, esp. 437–46; 2022, esp. chaps. 6–13). In sum, 'the Cairo Genizah' is, in reality, an amalgam of documents from various *genizot* and synagogue collections.

This compelling revisionist view implies that most Genizah documents from after the sixteenth century CE, plus a good number from the late Mamluk and early Ottoman eras, come from other sources than the Ben Ezra Synagogue. The Basātīn Cemetery is a likely source for many of them, particularly given its importance to the Ottoman-era Jewish community, as reflected in a 1649 *sharīʿa* court case confirming the Cairo Rabbanite Jewish community's jurisdiction over the cemetery (Davies 2019–20).

2.0. Egypt under the Ottomans

2.1. The Ottoman Conquest of Egypt and Syria

Beginning as a tiny emirate on the eastern frontier of the Byzantine Empire, in what is now northwestern Anatolia, at the end of the thirteenth century, the Ottoman Empire steadily expanded through the Balkans and Anatolia over the next century-and-a-half. The Ottomans captured Constantinople in 1453, putting an end to the Byzantine Empire (Inalcik 1973, 5–30; Kafadar 1995, 118–54). In 1516–17, the Ottoman sultan Selim I (r. 918–26 AH/1512–20 CE) attacked and conquered the Mamluk Sultanate, which had ruled Egypt, Greater Syria (today's Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, and Palestine), southeastern Anatolia, and the Hijaz since 1250.¹⁴

¹⁴ Holt (1966, 33–45); Lellouch and Michel (2013); Hathaway (2020, 34–37).

2.2. Administration in Ottoman Egypt

Egypt now became the largest province of the burgeoning empire, and the one that remitted the most revenue to the imperial coffers. An Ottoman governor, appointed every few years from Istanbul, presided over a formidable provincial administration, including a fiscal bureaucracy and seven (originally six) regiments of Ottoman soldiery. Initially, these garrison troops arrived from the Ottoman centre, as well, but by the early seventeenth century, they, like their counterparts in other Ottoman provinces, had acquired a decidedly local character, even if their ranks were periodically reinforced by recruits from the imperial centre. Regimental officers, above all those of the Janissary (*Mustahfizān*) corps, which in Egypt functioned largely as guards of Cairo's citadel, built up households of clients from within the lower officer ranks. They even recruited mercenaries and elite slaves (*mamluks*) from the Caucasus and promoted them through the ranks, all without the permission or meaningful interference of the governor or the central authority. The *Ḳazdağlı* household, which came to dominate Egypt entirely by the late eighteenth century, originated as one of these Janissary officer households in the mid-seventeenth century (Crecelius 1981; Hathaway 1997b, chs 1–5). Its officers receive mention, or at least allusion, in more than one of the documents presented here (Ch. 1, Document 3; Ch. 5, Document 5). Because Janissary officers controlled key urban revenue sources, including port customs, they sought to partner with, or co-opt, wealthy Jewish merchants who could administer the customs on their behalf (Shaw 1962, 103; see the introduction to Ch. 1, below). The introduction of Yemeni coffee to Egypt in the

final years of the Mamluk Sultanate gave these Janissary officers a source of staggering commercial wealth. By the mid-seventeenth century, Janissary officers, including the early *Ḳazdağlıs*, controlled the trade in Yemeni coffee through the Red Sea to Egypt and along the pilgrimage route to the Hijaz (Hathaway 1997b, 134–38; 2006, 168–70; Tuchscherer 2001).

In Egypt's countryside, tax revenues were the domain of—variously—regional Bedouin chieftains and sub-provincial administrators with the old Mamluk Sultanate rank of *kāshif* (literally, 'inspector', referring to a supervisor of irrigation works) or the Ottoman rank of *sanjāk beyi*. During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, *kāshifs* and beys, as they were commonly known, typically came to Egypt from the Ottoman central lands. They might be recruited through the *devshirme*, the distinctive Ottoman system of 'collecting' youths from the subject rural Christian populations of the Balkans and Anatolia, converting them to Islam, and training them for service as palace pages or Janissaries, or they might be the sons or brothers of imperial military officers or other officials, or prisoners of war from the Ottomans' European front. By the middle of the seventeenth century, however, more and more were mamluks from the Caucasus, often recruited directly by existing provincial officials, with little or no intervention from the governor or the imperial centre (Hathaway 2018b; 2020, 52). Their recruiters incorporated them into the households that they headed: conglomerations of kinship and clientage ties, similar to the regimental officer households described above, based in grandiose residences and boasting full contingents of soldiers and retainers, to both of which the new

recruits might contribute (Hathaway 1997b, 17–27, 125–30; 1999).

Until the early eighteenth century, the households of the most influential regimental officers concentrated on controlling urban revenues, notably port customs, while those of *sanjāk beyis* focused on rural revenues, above all the tax farms of concentrations of villages in Egypt's sub-provinces, although it was certainly not unheard of for Janissary officers to hold such tax farms as well. Around 1730, however, coffee from French colonial possessions in the Caribbean began to undercut Yemeni coffee prices.¹⁵ As a result, Janissary officers, above all the heads of the *Ḳazdağlı* household, began promoting clients to *sanjāk beyi* with the aim of expanding the sources of their wealth to include rural tax farms. They did so with the acquiescence of the Ottoman governor of Egypt. In this fashion, the *Ḳazdağlıs* came to dominate the beylicate while retaining their control over the Janissary regiment. By 1760, *sanjāk beyis* (known in the Arabic singular as *amīr liwāʾ*) had displaced Janissary officers as heads of the *Ḳazdağlı* household. Although an Ottoman governor still arrived from Istanbul every year or so, the *Ḳazdağlı* household head effectively controlled the entire province.¹⁶

This was the reality that the army of Napoleon Bonaparte confronted when it invaded Egypt in July 1798. Over the three years of their occupation, the French forces fought off the remnants of the old *Ḳazdağlı*-dominated forces, who were led by

¹⁵ Raymond (1973–74, I:155–57); Hathaway (1997b, 46, 130–38).

¹⁶ Crecelius (1981, 35–63, 104–31); Hathaway (1997b, 96–101, 137–38).

sanjāk beyis of Georgian mamluk origin.¹⁷ When the French finally evacuated in 1801, a new-model Ottoman army moved into Egypt. Within its ranks was a commander of irregular forces, one Meḥmed ‘Alī, who, over the next four years, would compete with various Ottoman governors and other military commanders until he emerged as autonomous governor of Egypt: a post he retained until shortly before his death in 1849. During his four decades of rule, he eliminated the last remnants of the old Georgian elite and imposed sweeping military and economic reforms, including an attempt at import–substitution industrialisation that left a mark in one of the documents presented here: Document 5 in Ch. 2 (Marsot 1983; Fahmy 1997 and 1998).

3.0. Jews in Ottoman Egypt

The conquest of Egypt and Syria gave the Ottomans jurisdiction over a large Jewish population, including untold thousands who had migrated into Mamluk territory following Spain’s and Portugal’s expulsion of their Jewish populations in 1492 and 1497, respectively. While the Mamluk Sultanate has acquired a particularly poor reputation for the treatment of its Jewish subjects, especially during and after the economic crisis of the early fifteenth century (Cohen 1984), it did retain the institutions of Jewish community leadership that dated from the Fatimid Caliphate (358–567 AH/969–1171 CE), above all the office of Head of the Jews (*Ra’īs al-Yāhūd*), known in Hebrew as the *nagīd*. For most of the Mamluk era, as noted above, this post was monopolised by

¹⁷ al-Jabartī (1166–1240 AH/1753–1825 CE; ‘*Ajā’ib al-āthār*, III:1–236; *History of Egypt*, 175–215).

the descendants of the great Moses Maimonides, himself a refugee from Spain under the stringent Almohad dynasty (Kraemer 2008, 35–37, 39–41, 83–98). The last Maimonidean *nagīd*, David ben Joshua, left Egypt for Syria in 1375, but returned in the early fifteenth century and resumed the office until his death. (See Ch. 4, Document 1, and the sources cited there.)

3.1. Jewish Community Leadership under the Ottomans

Following their conquest of the Mamluks, the Ottomans abolished the office of Head of the Jews entirely. This action had little, if anything, to do with the rabbinical authority they had recognised at the time of their conquest of Constantinople, whose influence was largely limited to Istanbul and vicinity (Hacker 1982, 119–20). Instead, it probably represents the codification of a trend already underway under the late Mamluk Sultanate, and perhaps indirectly linked to the end of the Maimonidean *nagīd* dynasty and the influx of Sephardic Jews into Egypt from Iberia and North Africa. Simply put, no single Jewish leader, no matter how learned, could wield authority over Egypt's entire Jewish population, which included Rabbanites of a widening array of regional backgrounds and Karaites with a lengthy history in Egypt. Instead, authority rested in the individual Jewish community (*qahal*), which, as Dotan Arad has pointed out, became the basic unit of Jewish life and activity in Egypt and other Ottoman provinces. These *qahals* fell into four major regional/doctrinal categories: Musta'ribs, the 'native' Arabophone Egyptian Jews; Maghribis, or North African Jews, some of whose families had

lived in Egypt for generations; Sephardim, the descendants of Ladino-speaking Jews who had been expelled from the Iberian peninsula; and Karaites, the Jewish subsect who rejected rabbinical tradition, who were generally Arabophone and whose ancestors had resided in Egypt for centuries.¹⁸

In these new circumstances, the rabbis and lay leaders of the various *qahals* represented their communities to officials of the local and provincial Ottoman administrations. Nonetheless, certain members of Egypt's Jewish elite came to wield extraordinary influence with the Ottoman governor and his entourage, as they had with the Fatimid, Ayyubid, and even Mamluk sultans in earlier periods. The difference was that instead of religious luminaries and physicians such as Moses Maimonides, these elite influencers now tended to be wealthy merchants, money lenders, and bankers, often of Sephardic descent. An early example was Abraham Castro, the Jewish director of Cairo's mint during the early 1520s, who famously fled to Istanbul to warn Sultan Süleyman I of the rebellion of the governor Khā'in ('Traitor') Ahmed Pasha in 1524 and who is represented in Ch. 1, Document 1 (and see the sources cited there). By the mid-seventeenth century, the governor's banker (*şarrāf*), known by the omnibus Turkish title *çelebi*, had come to be recognised as *de facto* head of Egypt's Jewish community, meaning chiefly that he was responsible for the payment of the community's poll tax, the *jizya*.¹⁹ His role, like

¹⁸ Hirschberg (1974); Arad (2011; 2017c, 258–59, 261–62; 2023, 23–24, 33–35).

¹⁹ Scholem (1973, 177–78); Winter (1983, 9–10); Hathaway (1997a, 667–68).

that of Castro, reflects the growing importance to Jewish community leadership in Egypt of wealthy and prominent lay members of the community, in contrast to the rabbinical elite that had represented the community in earlier periods.

3.2. The *Hāḥām Başı*

By the time the Genizah documents were removed from Cairo, the status of Egypt's Jews had been transformed by a combination of internal administrative reforms on the part of the Ottoman imperial government, as well as the government of Meḥmed 'Alī Pasha and his descendants in Egypt, and external pressures from European powers and organisations supported by them. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman central government recognised a prominent Istanbul rabbi as Chief Rabbi (Turkish, *Hāḥām Başı*) of the entire Ottoman Empire. As Avigdor Levy (2010) has pointed out, however, his authority was not automatically recognised throughout the empire; instead, for a number of years, different officials with the title *Hāḥām Başı* held sway in various locales. On the other hand, Jews living in Egypt under Meḥmed 'Alī's dynasty appear to have recognised the *Hāḥām Başı* in Istanbul. The fluidity of this reform-era community leadership is reflected in a document detailing the financial dealings of an early holder of this new title (Ch. 4, Document 4).

3.3. Other Nineteenth-century Transformations

Since the documents presented here run only through 1829, they do not reflect the full scope of the transformations that Egypt's Jewish communities would undergo over the course of

the nineteenth century, particularly in the thirty to forty years before Solomon Schechter's 'discovery' of the Cairo Genizah. Between 1839 and 1876, the Ottoman Empire undertook a series of defensive Europeanising reforms that extended to Egypt. For Jews, the most momentous of these was the 1856 imperial order (*ḥatt-ı hümayūn*) that granted non-Muslims equal rights with Muslims. They no longer had to pay the *jizya* and could, at least in theory, serve in the Ottoman armed forces (Hanioğlu 2010, 72–108). Meanwhile, European presence and influence, particularly those of the French and British, in Egypt increased dramatically, opening up opportunities for European employment and education, even in Europe itself, to middle- to upper-class citizens of all confessions, but Christians and Jews above all. Where Jews specifically were concerned, the foundation of schools at the end of the nineteenth century by the Paris-based Alliance Israélite Universelle educational foundation contributed to the formation of a new cosmopolitan, secularised, Francophone Jewish bourgeoisie that would leave its mark on Egyptian society in the early twentieth century (Laskier 1983, 158–64, 166, 168; Rodrigue 1990). The AIU's efforts in Egypt began just as the Genizah documents were being removed from the country.

Along with the forward-looking educational and cultural effects, however, increasing European influence threatened Egypt's economic and political autonomy, along with that of the Ottoman Empire as a whole. In 1875, British and French banks responded to the Egyptian government's increasing indebtedness by essentially assuming control of Egypt's economy, paving the way for the British military occupation of the province in 1882

in response to a military rebellion against the ruling *khedive* (Mar-sot 1968, 1–154; Hunter 1984, 179–229; Daly 1998). The British occupation, in many respects, created the conditions for the removal of the Genizah, which in any case had been preceded by several decades of exploration, and extraction and sale, of documents generated by the Jewish community, as S.D. Goitein, Rebecca Jefferson, and others have detailed (Goitein 1967, 2–6; Jefferson 2022, chs 2–5).

3.4. Where Jews Lived in Ottoman Egypt

As in other Ottoman provinces, Jews in Ottoman Egypt tended to concentrate in cities and towns. They had followed this pattern for some centuries, although the shift from rural to urban milieus was still in progress at the time of the initial Muslim conquest of Egypt in the seventh century CE and continued until at least the early ninth century (Stillman 1998, 199). Although the Mediterranean port city of Alexandria had boasted by far the largest concentration of Jews in Late Antiquity, it gradually gave way to *Fuṣṭāṭ*, the garrison town founded by the early Muslim armies on their conquest of Egypt in 20 AH/641 CE. And while *Fuṣṭāṭ* remained the hub of Jewish life until at least the Third Crusade, Jews moved steadily into *al-Qāhira*, the new capital founded to the northeast of *Fuṣṭāṭ* by the Fatimids on their conquest of Egypt in 358 AH/969 CE. There, they concentrated in the *Jawdariyya* quarter, just northwest of *Bāb Zuwayla*, the southern gate of *al-Qāhira*, until the neighbourhood's destruction by the erratic Fatimid caliph *al-Ḥākim* (r. 386–411 AH/996–1021 CE) (Behrens-Abouseif 1986, 122; Mazor 2021, 250). Jewish settlement then

shifted to the neighbourhood known as Ḥārat Zuwayla, located in the northwestern quadrant of al-Qāhira (and not to be confused with Bāb Zuwayla), where Egypt's largest concentration of Coptic Christians also resided. This neighbourhood would remain the hub of Jewish residence throughout the Ottoman period, even as the Coptic population shifted southeast to Ḥārat al-Rūm (Behrens-Abouseif 1986, 122–28, 131).

Outside of Cairo, Alexandria hosted a population of several hundred Jews into the nineteenth century, while the neighbouring port of Rosetta and the port of Damietta, at the mouth of the eastern branch of the Nile, were likewise home to smaller but not insignificant Jewish communities. In these port cities, Jewish employment in the customs administration meant that relative proximity to the customs station could be a factor in the location of Jewish residences. In Ottoman Alexandria, Jews and Copts had historically resided in a neighbourhood along the southern shore of the eastern harbour; it was located east of the Mamluk-era customs depot at Bāb al-Baḥr and south of the Ottoman-era customs depot on the eastern harbour's northwestern shore.²⁰ Unfortunately, it is difficult to tell where Jews lived in Ottoman Damietta, although there does seem to have been a concentration in a commercial quarter.²¹ Although Jews tended to coalesce in specific

²⁰ Winter (1983, 13–16); Stillman (1998, 202); Ashraf Ali and Abouelfadl (2022, 12896, 12900).

²¹ 'Abd al-Raḥīm (1992, 382, 413); Ashtor and Bornstein-Makovetsky (2007). 'Abd al-Raḥīm (1992, 382) mentions a *Wakālat al-Yahūd* in Damietta where some Jews lived—presumably in the 'tenement' housing known, in the singular, as *rab* over the *wakāla*—but not where it is

quarters in these and other cities, multi-confessional neighbourhoods appear to have been the norm rather than the exception, in the Ottoman era as in the ‘classical’ Genizah period, and Jews were never required to live in designated sectors.²² Among smaller inland towns, only al-Mahalla al-Kubrā in the Nile Delta sub-province of Gharbiyya had an identifiable Jewish quarter; elsewhere, Jews were scattered among different neighbourhoods, even if they tended to coalesce within certain quarters.²³

3.5. Jewish Occupations

As the documents analysed here make clear, Jews in Ottoman Egypt were over-represented in port customs administration and in financial services such as banking and money lending. A small elite oversaw the financial affairs of the Ottoman governor, powerful military officers, and Bedouin chieftains (Ch. 1, Documents 1 and 3; Ch. 3, Document 2). Members of this elite, as well as well-connected merchants and customs agents, are inevitably over-represented in the Arabic-script documents presented here, which by their nature include a critical mass of *sharīʿa* court records and

located. I am grateful to Safa Hamzeh of UCLA’s History Department for procuring a copy of this article for me. Despite the antisemitic tone of the article’s meagre analysis, the author quotes verbatim and extensively from *sharīʿa* court cases, enabling the reader to reconstruct the socio-economic reality.

²² Goitein (1967, 71; 1983, 16–17, 21); Behrens-Abouseif (1986, 119–20, 129, 131); Schroeter (1994, 291–93).

²³ Golb (1965, 266–69; 1974); Goitein (1971, 290; 1983, 13); David (1988); Stillman (1998, 202); Arad (2013, 26–36).

government rescripts of various kinds. These are just the sorts of documents that one would not expect to find in the Hebrew-script corpus. Nonetheless, numerous other, sometimes humbler, occupations also appear in the documents analysed here, e.g., travelling merchant, boat captain, flax-comber, doorkeeper (*bawwāb*) of a textile factory, and, of course, rabbi. What this evidence suggests is that Jews were present throughout Ottoman Egypt's economy, although the commercial and financial elite, at least before the mid-nineteenth century, tended to cluster in customs and banking. They often formed partnerships with Muslim administrative officials and with Muslim and Christian merchants, although at least one document (Ch. 1, Document 3) shows competition with Christian merchants for economic influence.

4.0. The Ottoman-Era Documents

4.1. Paper Graves and Family 'Archives'

Genizah documents from the period of Ottoman rule in Egypt differ in several key ways from documents produced during the 'classical' Genizah period, that is, the eleventh through the early thirteenth centuries. Following Rebecca Jefferson's arguments, we can posit that many, if not most, of the Ottoman corpus came not from the second-floor storage chamber of the Ben Ezra Synagogue but from the Basātīn Cemetery, other cemeteries, and other *genizot*, including that of Cairo's Karaite synagogue. Consigning papers to these repositories was apparently a fundamentally different process from the manner in which documents were deposited in the Ben Ezra storeroom between the tenth and the early sixteenth century. Most *genizot* were periodically emptied

and their contents buried in nearby cemeteries. In addition, a paper burial in a cemetery such as the Basātīn, Jefferson notes (2018, 428–29), often took place following the death of a prominent member of the Jewish community who left behind a corpus of letters, financial documents, and similar artifacts. Thus the resulting paper grave had less the character of an unemptied recycling bin, which is what the Ben Ezra cache must have resembled, and more that of a somewhat haphazardly organised family archive. This feature arguably explains why, for example, multiple documents exist related to the early seventeenth-century Alexandrian customs officer Salmūn al-Iskandarānī and to Cairo’s Mevlevī Sufi lodge. It also helps to explain why the Ottoman-era documents show almost no reuse of paper for unrelated purposes. In contrast, one of the best-known characteristics of the ‘classical’ Genizah documents is the reuse of the reverse sides and margins of documents, sometimes centuries later, for purposes that were utterly unconnected to the original documents (Goitein 1967, 7 and 1978, 96). Documents were cut up so that blank spaces could be used separately, but the use of palimpsests—that is, older documents in which the original writing is wholly or partially effaced—was common, as was the purchase of obsolete chancery documents or other kinds of scrap paper. Such strategies were common in the ‘classical’ Genizah period, when paper was still relatively new to the Eastern Mediterranean and not widely manufactured in the region (Ersoy 2001, 163–64). By the Ottoman era, in contrast, paper was far more widespread and easily acquired (Ersoy 2001, 164–65). In addition, the papers of a prominent community member during the Ottoman period would not

have been reused in this manner before his death. Thus, in the documents presented here, the verso is usually either blank or related to the recto, while marginalia continue or supplement the text on the recto.

4.2. Subjects

As to the subjects of the documents presented here, quite a number attest to interactions with the Muslim administrative apparatus, in particular the *sharīʿa* courts and the imperial palace. This is hardly surprising since these documents are composed in Arabic, as opposed to Hebrew, script; many of them were either produced by the administrative apparatus or resulted from the dealings of Jewish community members with Muslim officials who were part of that apparatus or, alternatively, with Muslim business partners. Six of our documents, nearly one quarter, are *sharīʿa* court cases. Of these, three concern debt or loan repayment while one describes a property transfer, one is a marriage contract, and one documents the appointment of two Jewish merchants to oversee Jewish pious endowments. Our corpus also includes five letters or petitions to unnamed Ottoman officials on various topics. Meanwhile, 11 documents, 44 percent, take the form of business letters, receipts, or a combination of the two. While six of these concern trade goods or fees, the remaining five cover loans, customs disputes, and reports to and requests of provincial luminaries. Of the remaining three documents, two make up a primer of Muslim practice while the last is a compilation of mystical poetry.

The following table provides an overview of the subjects of the documents presented here, in the order in which they appear in the book.

Ch	Shelf mark	Date (AH/CE)	Genre	Language	Subject
1	CAJS Halper 359	945/1538	<i>shari'a</i> court record	Arabic	debt repayment to the director of Damietta's customs
	T-S NS 297.6	1002/1594 (?)	letter to an official	Ottoman Turkish	tax farm of Damietta's customs
	CAJS Halper 222	1119/1708	letter	Arabic	dispute over Damietta's port revenues
2	T-S Ar. 38.111	early 11th/17th century?	letter	Ottoman Turkish	report of the agent of Alexandria's customs director
	T-S Ar. 39.425	1030/1621 (?)	letter	Ottoman Turkish	request to Alexandria's customs director to aid a traveller
	T-S AS 178.88	early 11th/17th century?	petition to an official	Ottoman Turkish	customs director's complaint about <i>kāshifs</i> stealing the <i>māl-i mīrī</i>
	Mosseri Xa.3.10	early 11th/17th century?	petition to an official	Ottoman Turkish	new tax farmer of <i>muqāṭa'a</i> named in T-S AS 178.88
	ENA 3941.4	1239/1824	receipt	Arabic	payment from the director of Alexandria's silk looms
3	T-S Ar. 39.341	mid-10th/16th century?	letter	Arabic	letter to Bedouin chieftain Muḥammad ibn Baghdād about a village
	ENA 3959.1	mid-10th/16th century?	petition to an official	Ottoman Turkish	selling Ibn Baghdād's textiles after his execution

Ch	Shelf mark	Date (AH/CE)	Genre	Language	Subject
3	T-S Ar. 39.370	late 10th /16th –early 11th/17th century?	letter	Arabic	a shipment of sheep
	AIU XII.173	1059/1649	<i>shari'a</i> court record	Arabic	a shipment of sugar and repayment of a debt
	AIU XII.86	1217/1802	letter	Arabic	trade in coral and gum arabic
	AIU XII.87	1223/1808	letter	Arabic	loan to a prominent Muslim merchant
	AIU XII.84	1236/1821	letter	Arabic	letter to 'brothers' about a clothing purchase
4	CUL Or. 1080 4.61	777/1375	<i>shari'a</i> court record	Arabic	transfer of part of a house in Cairo that may be near that of the Ra'is al-Yahūd
	T-S Ar. 51.104	904/1499	<i>shari'a</i> court record	Arabic	appointment by Ra'is al-Yahūd of merchants to oversee Jewish <i>waqf</i> property
	T-S Ar. 39.471	1024/1615	letter to an official	Ottoman Turkish	protection for a rabbi travelling to Jerusalem
	ENA 3958.10	1244/1829	<i>shari'a</i> court record	Arabic	loan repayment by Chief Rabbi
5	Manchester G 63	1002/1594	<i>shari'a</i> court record	Arabic	Muslim marriage contract
	T-S Ar. 39.153 and T-S NS 297.51	10th/16th century?	<i>ilm-i hāl</i>	Ottoman Turkish	basic instructions for Muslim practice

Ch	Shelf mark	Date (AH/CE)	Genre	Language	Subject
5	T-S Ar. 39.435	mid-12th/18th century	letter/receipt	Ottoman Turkish	shipment of fire-wood
	TS NS 306.84	mid-12th/18th century	letter/receipt	Ottoman Turkish	shipment of fire-wood
	ENA 3904.13	1172/1758	<i>cönk</i> (collection of folk poetry)	Ottoman Turkish	Sufi poems

4.3. Language of Composition

Turning to the languages in which the documents are composed, we would expect the court records to be in Arabic, which, after all, was the language of *shari‘a* courts in the Ottoman Arab provinces, as well as in the domains of the Mamluk Sultanate. Petitions to the sultan, in contrast, were composed in Ottoman Turkish, the language of the imperial court. Presumably, petitioners in Egypt and other Arab provinces hired professional Turcophone scribes to compose their petitions in the flowery high Turkish required of the genre. A majority of the commercial letters, meanwhile, are in Arabic, as we would expect in the case of merchants conducting business within Egypt or between Egypt and adjacent Arabophone territories. There appears to be no clear-cut example in this selection of a letter from a Jewish merchant to a Jewish business partner composed in Arabic in Arabic script. This is not surprising since Jewish, or at least Rabbanite, merchants typically corresponded with co-religionists in Judeo-Arabic, Ladino, or Hebrew, all written in Hebrew script. Karaites—Jews who rejected the rabbinical oral tradition—in contrast, often favoured

Arabic script (Khan 2020, 234). Notwithstanding, Rabbanite merchants, like their Karaite counterparts, certainly had a command of Arabic script, which they needed for transactions with Muslim and Christian associates, so it is certainly not out of the question that they used Arabic script to write to co-religionists on occasion.

In all, 12 of these 25 documents, nearly half, are composed in Ottoman Turkish. This is something of a surprise since most Jews in Egypt, even those descended from relatively recent immigrants from the Iberian Peninsula and the Italian city-states, would have used Arabic when dealing with Muslim or Christian business associates—and, of course, when dealing with Egypt's Muslim law courts. Five of these documents are letters or petitions to Ottoman officials, which had to be composed in Turkish. Similarly, it is no surprise that the two letters dealing with firewood for Cairo's Mevlevī Sufi lodge employ Ottoman Turkish: adherents of the Mevlevī order, even in the Arab provinces, were usually Turcophone Sufis from the Ottoman central lands, and moreover, the wood undoubtedly came from Anatolia. Slightly more surprising, perhaps, are reports in Turkish to the Jewish director of Alexandria's customs, although these were probably composed by clients of his based in the Ottoman central lands, or even at the Ottoman court. The remaining three Turkish documents—Sufi poetry and a primer of Muslim practice—are a bit harder to explain. As the discussion of Ch. 5, Documents 2–3, will point out, the primer may have been used by Jewish converts to Islam who were employed in the Ottoman provincial administration and, in that capacity, required familiarity with both Ottoman

Turkish and essential Muslim practice. The poetry collection, meanwhile, seems to reflect the attempt of a local author—who may have belonged to the provincial military forces and who could conceivably have been a convert to Islam—to reproduce and mimic well-established Turkish poetic genres.

5.0. Presenting the Documents

5.1. Arrangement of Chapters

We now turn to the documents themselves. I have arranged them in five chapters of between three and seven documents each. Each chapter centres on a particular theme and incorporates documents from a broad chronological range. Chapters 1 and 2 present documents, ranging from 945 AH/1538 CE to 1239 AH/1824 CE, from the critical Mediterranean ports of Damietta and Alexandria, respectively, with an emphasis on port customs. The documents comprising chapter 3—two from the tenth century AH/sixteenth century CE, two from the eleventh century AH/seventeenth century CE, and three from the early thirteenth century AH/nineteenth century CE—deal, for the most part, with trade between Jewish merchants and non-Jewish merchants, although the first document is a letter from one Muslim to another, and in two later documents, the confessional identities of at least some of the parties are unclear. Chapter 4 takes up various transactions, centring on property, debt, and security, that involve rabbis, above all the head of Egypt's Jewish community, and perhaps even that of the Ottoman Empire as a whole. This chapter boasts the widest chronological range in the book: 777–1244 AH/1375–1829 CE. Finally, Chapter 5 presents six somewhat

cryptic documents, ranging from the late tenth century AH/sixteenth century CE or thereabouts through the mid-twelfth century AH/eighteenth century CE, that appear, at least on the surface, to deal with exclusively Muslim concerns, from marriage to Sufism to basic Muslim practice.

5.2. Layout, Transcription, and Translation

Each chapter opens with a brief general introduction; each document is preceded by an analytical discussion, followed by the transcribed text of the document and an English translation. Arabic documents are transcribed in Arabic script while any Judeo-Arabic or Hebrew elements that they may contain are transcribed in Hebrew script. Following the conventions of the field of Ottoman studies, however, Ottoman Turkish documents, though composed in Arabic script, are transcribed in Latin letters, reflecting the fact that modern Turkish is written in a modified Latin alphabet. Transliteration of Arabic, where necessary, and of Ottoman Turkish follows the conventions of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*.

I have made every effort to provide a line-by-line translation for each document. Naturally, though, one would not expect every line of the original and the translation to correspond exactly because of differences in word order and syntax between modern English and the language of the original. Where the Ottoman Turkish documents are concerned, however, this misalignment is significant because of the character of the Ottoman and modern Turkish languages, which feature S-O-V sentence struc-

ture, nominalisations instead of relative clauses, and postpositions instead of prepositions. To some degree, line numbering in the translations of these documents reflects these syntactical differences.

In both transcriptions and translations, illegible text is indicated with ellipsis, i.e., Text that is missing because of damage to the document is indicated with empty square brackets, i.e., []. Text that has been reconstructed, on the basis of patterns of usage elsewhere in the document or common usage in the language in which the document is composed, appears between square brackets. The placement of text between double forward slashes, i.e., // //, indicates that the text has been inserted above the line in the original.

Dates are given according to the calendrical systems used in the various documents, with equivalents in the Common Era as appropriate. Calendrical system abbreviations are AM = Anno Mundi (the Hebrew calendar); CE = Common Era, or Gregorian; AH = Anno Hegirae, or *hijrī* (the Islamic calendar).

1. DOCUMENTS FROM OTTOMAN DAMIETTA

Chapters 1 and 2 illustrate the closely interconnected histories of the Mediterranean ports of Damietta and Alexandria under Ottoman rule. The eight documents that they cover reflect the Ottoman agenda for Egypt's Mediterranean ports, as well as the port cities' relationship with their rural hinterlands. While the two ports shared numerous characteristics, they also differed in key respects. At the time of the Ottoman conquest of Egypt from the Mamluk Sultanate in 1517, Alexandria, the terminus of the western branch of the Nile, was still an active port. In contrast, its counterpart on the Nile's eastern branch, the ancient port of Damietta (Dumyāṭ in Egyptian Arabic, Dimyāṭ in Turkish), had been destroyed by al-Zāhir Baybars, the founder of the Mamluk Sultanate, in 1250–51, in response to repeated Crusader attacks. Baybars had the town rebuilt farther inland, where it became a commercial centre on a reduced scale.

Under Ottoman rule, both Damietta and Alexandria were governed by naval captains (Ottoman Turkish singular, *deryā beyi* or *deryā beği*), who were subordinate to the Ottoman Grand Admiral (Evliyā, *Seyāhatnāme*, 386; Shaw 1962, 102, 134–36). What becomes clear from these documents is that the Ottomans, through these governors, sought to revitalise commercial shipping to and from both ports. In this venture, port customs played a major role, and Jewish merchants assumed critical positions in the customs administration. In the early years of

Ottoman rule, the tax farms (Arabic singular, *muqāṭaʿa* or *iltizām*) of these ports were sold at auction, often to non-Muslim (*dhimmī*) merchants who held them in their own right (Hanna 2013, 212–20). In the early seventeenth century, customs revenues were added to the Ottoman governor's financial compensation. He in turn assigned the customs tax farms to influential *dhimmī* merchants, who received the title *amīn* ('supervisor', 'director') (Shaw 1962, 99, 103). In 1672, however, Cairo's localised Janissary officers seized Egypt's port customs, with the exception of Suez, and thereafter held them as tax farms. Under this new order, Jewish merchants typically served as customs directors under Janissary supervision (Shaw 1962, 103). Regardless of their exact status, these *dhimmī* customs officials were known locally by the title *muʿallim*, an omnibus honorific that literally meant 'knowledgeable one', or 'expert', but that usually applied to influential non-Muslim merchants in various capacities.

Jewish employment in the customs administration was common to numerous Ottoman port cities, while Jewish enmeshment with military administrators, above all Janissary officers, has been noted in an array of provincial cities.¹ Meanwhile, the concern that the documents demonstrate with promoting commerce through Damietta, not only out to the Mediterranean but along the Nile to Cairo, is mirrored in the efforts of several Ottoman governors of Egypt and several Chief Harem Eunuchs in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to

¹ Mantran (1982, 132); Shtober (1989); Goffman (1990, 80–83, 88); Ginio (2014, 293, 303–4); Varlık (2014, 276–81, 282–85).

build commercial infrastructure in Damietta, Rosetta, Cairo, and Cairo's Nile port of Būlāq.²

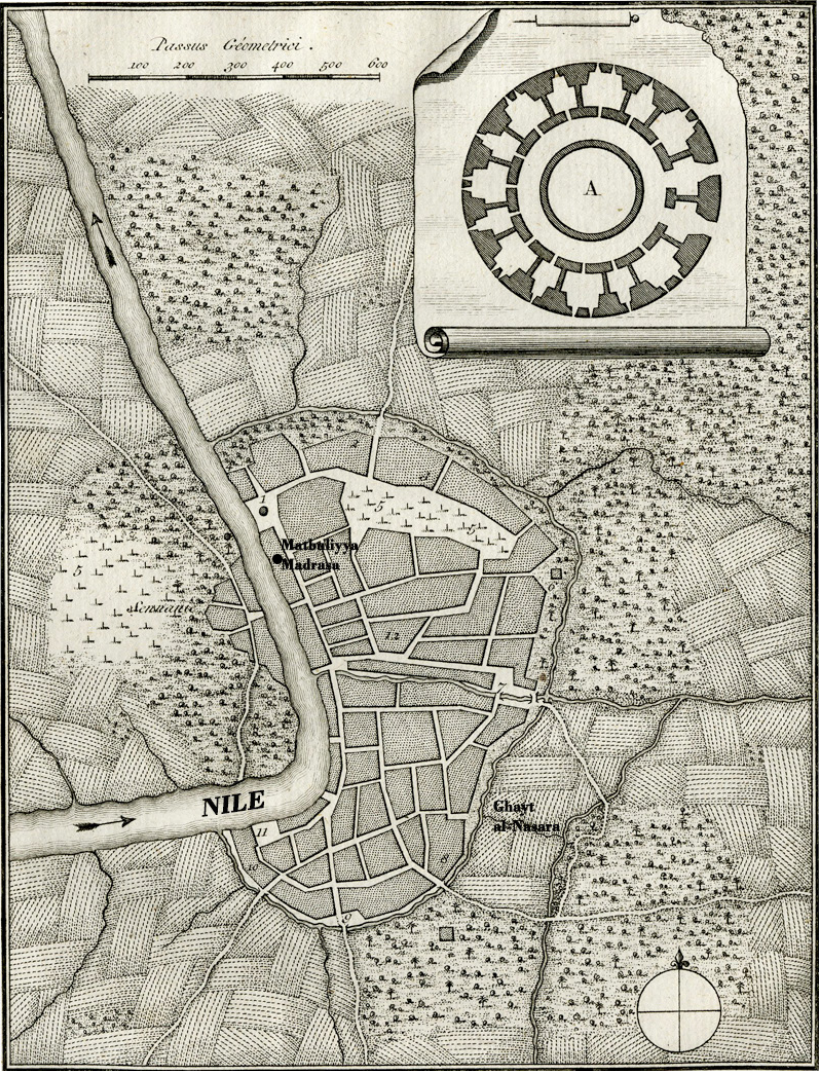
The documents presented in this chapter, which focuses on Damietta, come from all three phases in the evolution of customs supervision. Document 1 demonstrates the hold that the Jewish luminary Abraham Castro and his family held over the city's customs in the early years of Süleyman 'the Magnificent's' reign. Documents 2 and 3 depict the close connections between Jewish customs officials and members of Egypt's military-administrative hierarchy. Document 2 likewise centres on the outsized role that officials in Damietta, like their counterparts in Alexandria, played in assembling and sending the *māl-i mīrī* (literally, 'state property'): the provisions and tribute that Egypt supplied to the imperial palace annually.

Naturally, Damietta, like Egypt's other port cities, did not exist in a vacuum but relied on its hinterland, as well as on Cairo, for an array of provisions and administrative support. Damietta lies on the shores of Lake Manzala, a key point of trans-shipment of goods from the port to other locales in the Nile Delta and an important source of fish for both local and regional consumption and for export. The importance of the lake becomes apparent in the earliest of the documents (Doc. 1), a complicated debt-repayment case from Damietta dated 945 AH/1538 CE. Cairo's Janissary officers and their interest in Damietta's customs revenues loom large in the final document (Doc. 3), a 1120

² Behrens-Abouseif (1994, 173–77, 208–11); Hathaway (1994; 2018a, 184–89).

AH/1708 CE letter from the commander of Damietta's small garrison.

Map 4. Damietta in the eighteenth century (Niebuhr, *Voyage en Arabie*, Vol. 2, Table VII, public domain, modified)



DOCUMENT 1: CAJS HALPER 359

PAYING A DEBT TO ABRAHAM CASTRO, 1538³

1.0. Discussion

This complex and paleographically challenging court case summary, dated 945 AH/1538 CE, describes the settlement of a debt owed by two brothers to a prominent provincial notable and his son. Their chief creditor is Abraham Castro (d. 967 AH/1560 CE), director of Egypt's mint early in the period of Ottoman rule, who famously fled to Istanbul to warn the sultan when the governor Khā'in ('Traitor') Aḥmed Pasha launched a massive rebellion in 929 AH/1523 CE.⁴

Once Aḥmed Pasha's rebellion had been quashed and the traitor executed, Castro returned to Egypt, where his influence, already substantial, only increased.⁵ Sultan Süleyman I (known in the West as 'the Magnificent', r. 926–74 AH/1520–66 CE) granted him the tax farm, or *muqāṭa'a*, of Alexandria's customs.

³ I am profoundly grateful to Alan Elbaum of the Princeton Geniza Project for his assistance in deciphering this extremely difficult document.

⁴ Ibn Iyas (852–ca. 930 AH/1448–ca. 1524 CE; *Journal d'un bourgeois du Caire*, II:425, 426, 466); David (1972, 327, 330, 332–33; 1985, 147, 152–53); Shtober (1989, 83); Lellouch (2021; 2024, 24–34, 126–33, 137–44).

⁵ David (1972, 333, 335–37; 1985, 147–48); Lellouch (2024, 144–46).

He apparently held this post until late 1532, when he was removed, in part because of complaints by Venetian merchants who considered him hostile to their interests.⁶ On the evidence of the current document, Castro later obtained the equivalent position in Damietta for one of his sons, Joseph, whose existence is not documented in other known sources.⁷ Holding the customs *muqāṭaʿa* was no light undertaking: it entailed inventorying all goods passing through the port, collecting customs dues on them, ensuring that a predetermined portion was expended locally, and delivering the remainder to the imperial treasury (Shaw 1962, 101–2). While the granting of revenue-collection rights to elites outside the ruler’s court had been common in Egypt since the Ayyubid era (566–647 AH/1171–1250 CE), the Ottoman administration introduced the sale of tax-collection rights to civilians who were not part of the military–administrative hierarchy, many with the omnibus title *muʿallim* (Hanna 2013). Muslim law court documents from Damietta in the 1570s show Jewish merchants consistently taking on this responsibility (ʿAbd al-Raḥīm 1992, 400–1, 404–5). Before the seventeenth century, moreover, as noted in the chapter introduction, they purchased and held these tax farms in their own right, not as subordinates

⁶ David (1985, 151–52); Arbel (1995, 34, 35–40, 43–44, 45; 1996, 338–40, 352).

⁷ Castro’s previously known sons were Moses and the famous halakhic scholar Jacob (931–1020 AH/1525–1612 CE). See David (1972, 336; 1985, 154; 2007; 2016b); Shochetman (1983, 393–94); Lellouch (2024, 162).

to the provincial governor or Janissary officers (Hanna 2013, 219–20).

The term that our document uses for a tax farmer of port customs is *‘āmil*, a Mamluk Sultanate-era title for a sub-provincial governor that the Ottomans retained, with the connotation of a district tax farmer, in Egypt and Yemen.⁸ In holding these posts, Abraham and Joseph helped to cement the tradition of Jewish port customs directors in Egypt that would continue until the mid-eighteenth century.

1.1. The Document’s Format

In its format, this case follows debt repayment and inheritance case prototypes from the late Mamluk Sultanate as represented in cases from the Ḥaram al-Sharīf courts in Jerusalem, studied by the late Donald Little. As in those documents, the case is laid out on the recto of the document, although in our specimen, the text that appears in the right margin of the recto, perpendicular to the bulk of the text, is a continuation of the case description rather than a summation of the judge’s instructions (*tawqīʿ*).⁹ Meanwhile, the resolution and the final distribution of money and property occupy the verso, a follow-up, or ‘transfer’, document known in Arabic as a *faṣl* or *faṣl ḥawāla*.¹⁰ In this particular example, the verso comprises two separate columns, although

⁸ Arbel (1995, 34, 51); Hathaway (2003, 82, 86); Michel (2019, 215, 217–18, 308–11, 322).

⁹ Little (1984, 45, 189, 277; 1998, 99, 101, 105, 110, 122, 134, 141, 159–60).

¹⁰ Little (1998, 122, 143, 144); Tillier and Vanthieghem (2024, 356).

there is no evidence that the document was folded to form a bifolio. The left side of the verso was composed immediately after the description of the case on the recto; it certifies the transfer of 18 shares of the brothers' boat to Castro's son Joseph. The presiding judge's *ʿalāma*, a pious motto distinctive to each judge, occupies the top left corner of both recto and verso (Little 1998, 105, 110, 141, 146, 159). In this specimen, the *ʿalāma* on the verso is different from that on the recto, probably indicating that it belonged to the Shāfiʿī judge named on the verso's left-hand side (see below). Apart from this detail, the only significant change to this overall format in the Ottoman period was the relocation of the date of the court case from the top of the document to the bottom, as was standard in Ottoman chancery documents of all types.

1.2. The Judges

The case initially came before the judge ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn Ḥasan al-Akṣarāyī, whose *ʿalāma* dominates the left side of the document's recto, and who is named twice on the recto while his seal appears once on the recto and once on the verso. His *nisba* indicates that he, or at least his forebears, came from Aksaray, a city in south-central Anatolia that had a lengthy tradition, dating back to at least the early fourteenth century, of nurturing Muslim *ʿulamāʾ*, or scholars, a number of whom ended up in Egypt under the Mamluk Sultanate.¹¹ Another ʿAbd al-Raḥman al-Akṣarāyī,

¹¹ E.g., Ibn Iyās (*Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, II:74, 96–97, 157–58); Ibn Taghrībīrdī (d. 874 AH/1470 CE; *Nujūm*, IX:83–84); al-Maqrīzī (766–845 AH/1364–1442 CE; *Khīṭaṭ*, III:588).

who apparently never emigrated, composed what is arguably the best-known work in Turkey today of *‘ilm al-ḥāl*, the sort of primer of Muslim doctrine and praxis represented by Ch. 5, Docs 2–3 (al-Akṣarāyī [sixteenth century?], *Imādū’l-islām*; Arpaguş 2000). But all these other Akṣarāyīs belonged to the Ḥanafī legal rite (*madhhab*) of Sunni Islam, as did most central Anatolian Muslims. The Damietta judge, in contrast, belonged to the Ḥanbalī rite, which at the time lacked a critical mass of followers in Egypt or, indeed, anywhere in the Ottoman lands, with the exception of Damascus.

‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Akṣarāyī of Damietta must have changed his *madhhab*, not necessarily because he had had a change of heart and ‘converted’ to Ḥanbalism but possibly because he wanted to specialise in areas of the law in which the Ḥanbalī *madhhab* offered more flexibility than the Ḥanafī rite, which was the Ottoman Empire’s official *madhhab*. Two areas that stand out involve property endowed as *waqf*: the sale or rental for more than three years of such properties, and endowing the usufruct of such a property rather than the property itself. Whereas the Ḥanbalī rite permits all these activities, the Ḥanafī rite does not. The Ḥanbalī rite, unlike the Ḥanafī, also protects renters by prohibiting increases in a property’s rental value and stipulating that a rental contract remains valid after the death of one of the parties to the contract. As a result, Ḥanbalī judges monopolised court cases concerning these issues during the Ottoman era, at least in Cairo (Rapoport 2003; Ibrahim 2015,

137–42, 143, 144–45).¹² It is, admittedly, a bit difficult to see how these concerns would apply to the present case, unless possibly Joseph Castro had endowed the boat, or its use, and the two brothers had been renting the boat long-term from him. In that case, bringing the case before al-Akṣarāyī may have simplified Joseph's efforts to reclaim the three-quarters share in the boat from the brothers.

Where the judge himself was concerned, the change of *madhhab* would have enabled him to carve out a niche for himself in the fluid legal landscape of early Ottoman Damietta. The Ottomans, unlike their Mamluk predecessors, appointed Ḥanafī chief judges to all provinces and all major cities. The other three Sunni *madhhabs* were represented by subordinate, usually Arabophone, judges known by at least the seventeenth century as *nā'ibs* (Hathaway 2020, 108–10). Al-Akṣarāyī's native tongue could have been either Arabic or Ottoman Turkish; regardless, he was probably a fluent Arabic-speaker who had no need of a translator in his court. He was not alone among Anatolian immigrants, and their descendants, who secured judgeships in early Ottoman Damietta. The city's Ḥanafī judge at the time of this court case was 'Abdüşşamed Diyārbekrī, who had fled the southeastern Anatolian city of Diyarbakir in 1507, when the militant Twelver Shi'ite Safavids briefly occupied it. Diyārbekrī composed a history of Egypt, in Ottoman Turkish, that, despite the author's residence in Damietta, centres largely on events in Cairo (Lellouch 2006, esp. 110–80). The two judges must

¹² I am also grateful to Yasmine Badr for pointing out these differences via e-mail.

certainly have known each other, yet Diyārbekrī's chronicle, which consists largely of a translation of Ibn Iyās' *Badā'i' al-zuhūr fī waqā'i' al-duhūr*, combined with portions of a history by Ibn Tulūnī, makes no mention of al-Akṣarāyī, let alone of the parties to this court case, with whom he must likewise have been familiar. Nonetheless, al-Akṣarāyī's switch to Ḥanbalism allowed him to obtain a prestigious post in the port city with no fear of encroaching on Diyārbekrī's turf.

Al-Akṣarāyī is the only judge named on our document's recto. On the left side of the verso, however, a second judge enters the case to preside over the brothers' settlement of their debt to Mu'allim Joseph. This is Abū al-Baqā' Muḥammad al-Dumyāṭī, Damietta's Shāfi'ī *nā'ib*. The Dumyāṭī *nisba* implies that this personage was the scion of a family with deep roots in the port city, and certainly a native Arabic-speaker. Despite his undoubted importance in Damietta and vicinity—the majority of the Muslim population of the Nile Delta were Shāfi'ī—his main function seems to have been witnessing the brothers' pledge of shares in the boat to Joseph as security for the debt adjudicated by al-Akṣarāyī. Yet his supervision may have benefited the boatman Sulaymān al-Jarbalī, who abruptly appears as a party to the case on the right side of the verso, since the Shāfi'ī rite favours claimants in property disputes who are in possession of contested property (Ibrahim 2015, 146–47). In fact, the boat was probably already in Sulaymān's possession at the time of the court case.

1.3. The Court Building

Our document stipulates, on both recto and verso, that court was held in Damietta's 'Musallamiyya' or 'Musallam' madrasa. This may, in fact, have been the Maṭbūliyya Madrasa, a large and important institution, built under the Mamluk sultan Qaytbay (r. 872–901 AH/1468–96 CE), that the Ottoman traveller Evliyā Çelebi (ca. 1019–93 AH/1611–82 CE), who spent the last decade or so of his life in Egypt, describes as resembling 'Damietta's al-Azhar'. Nearby lay the tomb of a Shaykh Musallamī, perhaps a Sufi, who presumably lent his name to the entire complex (Evliyā, *Seyāhatnāme*, 388, 392; Salmon 1902, 72). The site, now reduced to the modest Maṭbūlī Mosque, lies on the east bank of the Damietta branch of the Nile. The brothers Abū al-Baqā' and Abū al-ʿIzz, the court case tells us, lived in Damietta's Ghayd al-Naṣāra ('Garden of the Christians') quarter, today the site of the major thoroughfare called Ghayt al-Naṣrī, roughly three kilometres (1.8 miles) southeast of the Maṭbūlī Mosque.

1.4. The Two Brothers

While the Castros are clearly Jewish, Abū al-Baqā' and Abū al-ʿIzz are Muslims, sons of the late Badr al-Dīn, who, the document notes, is customarily called by the diminutive Budayr ('little Badr'); he appears under this nickname a total of five times in this document. Frequently, this sort of diminutive has derogatory connotations, as if the intention were to disparage the person so named (Hathaway 2003, 64–65). Here, however, it has, for the most part, a neutral affect, as if it were a routine substitute for

‘Badr’. Quite possibly Badr al-Dīn himself preferred to be called Budayr; perhaps he was a man of small stature.

Badr al-Dīn’s own father, Aḥmad, has his own distinctive sobriquet, ‘Bighos’, which, as Alan Elbaum discovered, is a Latinate form of the title *bey* or *bek*, the Turkic title for a regional overlord (Bartal 1901, 72). Aḥmad was almost certainly not one of the Ottoman officials, known in Turkish as *sanjāk beyi* and in Arabic as *amīr līwā*, who governed sub-provincial districts in Egypt, as in other Ottoman provinces. If he had held this rank, the court document would certainly refer to him by his Turkish title, with which the judge and his scribes would have been well familiar, rather than adopting this curious Latinate rendering. In addition, Aḥmad would presumably have acquired his cognomen before the Ottomans added Egypt to their empire in 1517. Since the Mamluk Sultanate did not employ the rank or title of *bey*, Aḥmad may conceivably have acquired it under a different Turkic polity, possibly one of the Anatolian emirates that competed with the Ottomans before the conquests of Sultan Mehmed II in the second half of the fifteenth century. Some of these emirates, notably Karaman in central Anatolia, which ruled Aḫṣaray from 780–874 AH/1380–1470 CE, enjoyed generally good relations with the Mamluks (Sümer 2001, 456–59). Perhaps Aḥmad himself, like the judge or his ancestors, had immigrated to Egypt from Anatolia.

1.5. The Debt and the Boat

The brothers Abū al-Baqā’ and Abū al-‘Izz owe Joseph Castro—and through him, as it turns out, his father Abraham—1,500 *niṣf*

fiḍḍa, possibly from a loan. (The *niṣf fiḍḍa* [literally, ‘half silver’], also known as *pāra*, was the silver coin, originally minted in the early fifteenth century, that was in use in Egypt through much of the Ottoman era) (Raymond 1973–74, I:34–36). As the left side of the document’s verso explains, they pledge a three-quarters share of a boat as security for this debt. The elaborate description in this part of the document of ‘the boat that customarily sails in the lakes of Tinnīs’, with all its equipment, indicates that the brothers, and possibly their forebears, fished or transported people or goods in Lake Manzala, the body of water of which ‘the lakes of Tinnīs’ formed a part. Tinnīs was the fabled town on the lake’s eastern shore that produced fine linen under the Fatimid caliphate (358–567 AH/969–1171 CE) but that was destroyed by the Ayyubid sultan al-Mālik al-Kāmil in 1227 to prevent further Crusader occupations; Damietta lay across the lake from it.¹³ During the Mamluk and Ottoman periods, hundreds and even thousands of commercial fishermen plied the lake’s waters (Evliyā, *Seyāhatnāme*, 389; al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, I:510).

This boat was undoubtedly a felucca, the sort of sailing boat commonly used for fishing in Lake Manzala (*Description de l’Égypte*, Plate 76; Ebers 1885, 109). It would have had a lateen, or triangular, sail that was attached to the long wooden pole known as the yard arm. When the sail on such a boat is raised, the yard arm moves up and across the mast to sit at a diagonal, with the lower end close to the boat’s bow. The sail’s position is controlled by ropes that run through pulleys from the middle of

¹³ Goitein (1967, 98, 156; 1971, 194; 1983, 166–67, 176); Mouton (1998).

the yard arm through the halyard, a block of wood or metal mounted at the top of the mast (the masthead). The two bottom ends of the sail are attached by ropes to the bow and the stern. When under sail, the boat is steered by means of a tiller attached to a rudder in the stern (Boat Rambler 2020); however, this particular boat also featured oars that the crew could employ for both motion and steering in the absence of wind. To fish, the crew of such a boat would have used nets, as Document 3 in this chapter makes clear. This particular boat also used some sort of receptacles filled with seawater as ballast; hung from the mast, they provided even load distribution and kept the boat buoyant. Water ballast, as opposed to sandbags or iron weights, allowed the crew simply to release water to reduce the vessel's draft when it entered shallow water, and to compensate when hauls of fish or loads of goods increased the vessel's weight.

While the court scribe could probably have reproduced our document's arcane legal verbiage in his sleep, he was undoubtedly far less familiar with the terms for the boat's appurtenances. These would have been described in colloquial Arabic by parties who were not necessarily literate, and certainly not highly literate. Hence the unconventional renderings of this highly specialised nautical vocabulary come as little surprise.

1.6. The Filing Note and the Addendum

The initial debt is certified on our document's recto and on the left side of the verso, dated 10 Rabī' I 945/6 August 1538. The same day, one of Abraham Castro's agents, perhaps even Ya'qūb ibn Yūsuf (on whom see below), added a Judeo-Arabic filing note

to the upper right corner of the verso, perpendicular to the Arabic text of the court case. This sort of filing note is not terribly uncommon in court records from the Genizah or, indeed, from other collections.¹⁴ The note identifies the document as an *ishshād*, or attestation (Little 1984, 45, 60; 1998, 141–43), of the two brothers' debt to Abraham. Here, Abraham is not called Castro but simply Mu'allim Abraham, and identified as the director of the customs. The two brothers are labelled 'the sons of Budayr [ib]n Bighos' (אולאד בודיר ב' ב'גוס), and their debt is linked to the customs, reinforcing the allusion on the recto to proceeds from 'the legal tax farm'. The brothers may have collected taxes or dues for the customs director, or possibly they received fishing rights in Lake Manzala from him (cf. 'Abd al-Raḥīm 1992, 390, 392–93, 407–8, 410–12).

The wording of the filing note arguably foreshadows what developed some seven weeks later as described in an addendum on the right side of the verso. Here, the court clarifies that the 1,500 *nisfs* belong not to Joseph but to his father Abraham. To fulfil this debt, Abū al-Baqā' and Abū al-'Izz sell their three-quarters share in the boat to Abraham's agent, Ya'qūb ibn Yūsuf. This Ya'qūb held the influential office of scribe (*kātib*) for the administrative council (*dīwān*) of the Ottoman governor of Damietta. He could conceivably be the son of Mu'allim Joseph, and thus the grandson of Abraham Castro. Abraham Castro

¹⁴ For example, AIU VII.D.60, Bodl. MS heb. b 13/39, JRL Gaster ar. 67, JRL Gaster ar. 419, T-S 8J7.12, T-S 13J37.3, T-S 16.33, T-S Ar. 39.122; Abbott (1941, 77 and first two plates following p. 80); Little (1984, *passim*); Wilfong (1998, 185, n. 35).

commonly positioned family members in such roles: in addition to placing his son Joseph at the head of Damietta's customs, he named his own brother Benjamin as one of his guarantors (sing., *kāfil*) for the farm of Alexandria's customs (David 2016a, 287–95; Lellouch 2024, 145). Nonetheless, this identification of Ya'qūb seems rather unlikely: Castro's two better-known sons would have been teenagers in 1538; thus Joseph was probably still a relatively young man at the time and unlikely to have had a son old enough and experienced enough to hold such an influential position. In addition, if a figure as prominent as the governor's scribe had been a descendant of Castro, the court document would probably note the relationship. Regardless of his identity, in any case, the scribe would have been an important connection for Abraham Castro to have. Among other things, he could monitor the activities of Abraham's son.

Sale of the three-quarter share of the boat covers 1,165 *nišfs*' worth of the brothers' debt, and Abraham forgives the remaining 335 *nišfs*. The remaining quarter-share of the boat belongs to a previously unmentioned party, the boatman (*al-marākabī*) Sulaymān ibn Abī al-Ḥasan al-Jarbālī, who may have piloted the boat while the two brothers plied their trade. This man's name indicates origin or heritage on the island of Djerba, off the eastern coast of Tunisia, which boasted a sizeable Jewish population (Udovitch, Valensi, and Pérez 1984, esp. 7–21),¹⁵ although we cannot tell whether or not he is Jewish. During the

¹⁵ The *-lī* suffix is the Turkish adjectival form, although by the rules of Turkish vowel harmony, it should feature an unvoiced 'i', represented in Latin script as *ı*.

first half of the sixteenth century, Djerba, and Tunisia as a whole, was a bone of contention among the Ottomans, the Spanish Habsburgs, and the Amazigh (Berber) Ḥafṣid dynasty, and it is possible that Sulaymān and/or his forebears had migrated to Egypt to escape the upheaval (Abun-Nasr 1987, 168–69). As a result of the court settlement, he and Abraham co-owned the entire boat.

The boat probably remained in Sulaymān's possession since Abraham was not physically present in Damietta at the time of the court case and may not even have been residing in Egypt at all by 1538. He relocated to Jerusalem in the late 1530s and spent several years there.¹⁶ Hence he is represented at court by his agent Ya'qūb. The seven-week interval between the main text of the document and the addendum presumably allowed Ya'qūb to communicate with the absent Abraham and learn his wishes for the final resolution of the debt. Along with the filing note, this addendum makes it clear, in any case, that Joseph Castro, in his capacity as customs director of Damietta, was acting entirely as his father's proxy.

1.7. The Document's Fate and the Place of Damietta

To judge from the filing note, this Genizah document was archived, perhaps by Ya'qūb ibn Yūsuf or his assistants, long

¹⁶ See David (1972, 330, 334–35; 1985, 149–50, 151; 2007); Arbel (1995, 31, 33, 49; 1996, 334). Arbel (1995, 41–43, 49; 1996, 343, 347) notes a second Abraham Castro who was active in some of the same functions in Greater Syria around the same time but who converted to Islam.

before it was deposited in the Genizah. The Castro family were, obviously, important figures in Ottoman Egypt and beyond. During much of the Ottoman era, when such a key member of Egypt's Jewish community died, his important family papers were usually buried together in a nearby cemetery (Jefferson 2018, 428–29); this is how Cairo's Basātīn Cemetery came to hold multiple documents related to specific personages. This may well have been the fate of this court case following Abraham Castro's death ca. 967 AH/1560 CE.

Meanwhile, the Castro family's interest in the customs revenues of Damietta and Alexandria, as well as the financial networks that Abraham Castro constructed in both cities, testifies to the growing volume of trade through these two Mediterranean ports. The family's seeming encouragement of commercial traffic in Lake Manzala underlines their promotion of productive economic activity in Egypt's Mediterranean ports. This stance was consistent with overall Ottoman policy toward the port cities: as noted in the chapter introduction, Ottoman officials took pains to construct commercial infrastructure that would support trade to the ports from Cairo and from the ports to other parts of the empire. The activities of Abraham Castro and his family members helped to spearhead this long-term effort. In later years, the volume of trade through Damietta and other ports would only increase, making the customs an object of competition, as Documents 2 and 3 will show.

2.0. Text

Paper. 27.9 cm x 18.7 cm.

Recto**The judge ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Akṣarāyī’s ‘alāma**

- 1 الحمد لله وهو حسبي هلك حساده
- 2 كتبه [؟] الفقير عبد الرحمن الاقصراي الحنبلي
- 3 المولى قضا دمياط وخلافتها

Main Text

- 1 باسم الله الرحمن الرحيم فتوكل [؟]
- 2 بالمحكمة الشرعية بالمدرسة المسلمية بثمر دمياط المحروس بين يدي سيدنا
- 3 العبد الفقير الى الله تعالى الشيخ الامام
- 4 الاظهر العالم العلامة زين الدين شرف العلماء اوجد الفضلاء مفتي المسلم
- 5 ابي هريرة عبد الرحمن
- 6 الاقصراي الحنبلي خليفة الحكم العزيز بالثغر المذكور ايد الله تعالى احكامه
- 7 واحسن اليه بعدل تصادق
- 8 الاخوان الشقيقان هما ابو البقا وابو العز ولدا المرحوم بدر الدين المدعو بدير
- 9 بن المرحوم الشهابي
- 10 احمد المدعو بيغوس الحرمي جدهما بغيد النصاري بالثغر المذكور والمعلم
- 11 يوسف بن المعلم ابراهيم كاستروا
- 12 العامل بالثغر المذكور الان تصادق شرعي وهم بحال الصحة والسلامة
- 13 والطواعية والاختيار على ان الذي

- 8 يستحقه المعلم يوسف المذكور اعلاه في ذمة ابي البقا وابي العز المذكورين اعلاه من [؟]... الضمان الشرعي
- 9 لوالدهما بدير المذكور ولجدهما احمد بيغوس المذكور فيه من دين شرعي سالف على تاريخه ومعاملة كانت بينهم
- 10 ما جملته من الفضة العثمانية القطع الكبار معاملة مصر الان الف نصف وخمس مائة نصف استحقاقا شرعيا
- 11 بالطريق الشرعي على حكم الحلول اقر ابو البقا و ابو العز المذكوران اعلاه وهما فريق اول
- 12 فيما ياتي ذكره فيه والمعلم يوسف المذكور وهو بمجرد فريق ثان للاقرار [ال] شرعي ان كل فريق منهما
- 13 لا يستحق ولا يستوجب قبل الفريق الاخر بعد ذلك وزاد المعلم يوسف المذكور في اقراره انه لا
- 14 يستحق لنفسه ولا لوالده ابراهيم المذكور قبل الفريق الاول ولا في ذمة بدير المذكور ولا في ذمة والده
- 15 احمد بيغوس ولا على احد من ورثتهما حقا ولا استحقاقا ولا دعوى ولا طلبا بوجه ولا سبب
- 16 ولا فضة ولا ذهب ولا فلوسا ولا قبضا ولا اقباضا ولا حسابا ولا غلطا فيه ولا جهالا ولا
- 17 نسيانا ولا ذهولا ولا دينيا ولا عينا ولا وصا ولا اقراضا ولا الزاما ولا دعوى بذلك

- 18 ولا شيا من الاشيا قليلا وكثيرها جليلها وحقيرها ذميمها وامانها جارها وموكلها [؟] ثابتها
- 19 ومتقولها على اختلاف انواعها وتباين اجناسها وتعديل صفاتها ولا علقه ولا تبعا ولا يميننا
- 20 بالله تعالى ولا شيا قل ولا جل لسالف الزمان والى تاريخه ما عدى ما يستحق يوسف المذكور في ذمة ابي البقا
- 21 وابي العز المذكورين اعلاه وهو المبلغ المتصادق عليه اعلاه وعلق الرهن الاتي ذكره في ظاهره في اليمين
- 22 الذي رهنها في يوم تاريخه لورائه على ذلك وبرا كل فريق منهما ذمة الفريق الاخر ويده وامانته
- 23 من سائر العلق والتبعات والدعاوى والمطالبات والايمان الواجبات البراة الشرعية القاطعة الحازمة الحاسمة
- 24 ال... المرجعة لكل حق ودعوى ويمين يتقدم تاريخه والى تاريخه ما عدى المسمي اعلاه قبل كل فريق جميلتهما [؟]

Right Margin, Perpendicular

- 1 ذلك التفسير [؟] من الفريق الاخر قبولاً شرعياً باعترافهم بذلك لشهوده وتصادقهم على التصادق الشرعي ولما تكامل ذلك بالشهادة عليهم كما شرح اعلاه وثبت

- 2 لدي سيدنا ال... ال... المعلم المشار اليه اعلاه اشهاد المذكورين اعلاه
على انفسهم بما نسب اليهم اعلاه على ما نص وشرح اعلاه بثبوت شرعي
شهادة شهد به ثبوتا
- 3 صحيحا شرعيا حكم ايد الله تعالى احكامه واحسن اليه بموجب ما اشهد به
كل منهم على نفسه من ذلك حكما صحيحا شرعيا تاما معتبرا مرضيا
- 4 مسولا في ذلك مستوفيا شرايط الشرع وواجباته المحررة المدعية عالما
بالخلاف من ذلك وشهد على نفسه الكريمة بذلك في عاشر ربيع الاول سنة
خمس واربعين وتسعمائة

Witnesses

Right

- 1 شهد عليهم بذلك
- 2 عبد العزيز الحالولي [؟]...

Middle: Seal of 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Akṣarayī

- 1 المعتمد على الله
- 2 العلي عبد الرحمن
- 3 الاقصراري
- 4 الحنبلي

Left

- 1 شهد عليهم بذلك
- 2 محمد ابن محمد ابن علم الدين

Verso, Left Column

The judge Abū al-Baqā' Muḥammad al-Dumyāṭī's *'alāma*

الحمد لله... الى قيامته

Main Text

- 1 الحمد لله
- 2 بالمحكمة الشرعية المشار اليها باطنه رهنا
- 3 ابو البقا وابو العز المذكوران باطنها تحت يد المعلم يوسف
- 4 المذكور باطنه توثقة على المبلغ المذكور باطنه وعلى كل جزو منه الى
- 5 حين وفائه شرعا ما هو بيدهما وفي ذمتهما وشهدا باعترافهما
- 6 بذلك لشهوده وهو جميع الحصة التي قدرها النصف والربع
- 7 ثمانية عشر سمها كاملا من جميع المركب المقررة المجرة ببخيرات
- 8 تنيس الذي ذكر ان طولها من سفلىها احد عشر ذراعا
- 9 مشدودا بحبول [؟] موجهي الحراس [؟] مدمين [؟] سفلا وشطر الحصة
- المذكورة
- 10 من عدتها وهي صاري تعلقها صابورما بحر وقرا [ط] وقلعيات [؟]

11 وق(ط)ع ماسكة [؟] وداومان [؟] ومرسة حديد مسماري واربع مجاذيف

في...

[Much of the following line is obscured by a fold.]

12 واربع مداري ورباعي [؟] وبوص[لة] عليهم الجهات والاطراف

13 ومجاري الرياح المعلوم ذلك عندهم العلم شرعي رهنا

14 صحيحا شرعيا مقبولا مقبوضا مسلما بالاذن فيه معتادا

15 للانتفاع به مع نقل سلطة الرهن المذكور على حكمه فيه

16 باعترافهم بذلك لشهوده وتصرفهم عليه ولما تكامل ذلك

17 بالشهادة عليهم كما شرح اعلاه وثبت لدي سيدنا العبد الفقير

18 الى الله تعالى الشيخ الامام العالم العلامة جلال الدين

19 شرف العلما اوحدا الفضلا مفتي المسلم ابي البقا محمد الدمياطي

20 الشافعي خليفة الحكم العزيز بالثغر المذكور باطنه ايد الله تعالى احكامه

21 واحسن اليه اشهاد المذكورين اعلاه على انفسهم بما نسب اليهم اعلاه

22 على ما نص وشرح اعلاه الثبوت على شهادة شهدت به

23 حاكم ايد الله تعالى احكامه واحسن اليه بموجب

24 ما اشهد به كل منهم على نفسه من ذلك حكما صحيحا شرعا

25 تاما معتبرا مرضيا مسولا في ذلك مستوفيا شرايط

26 الشرع وواجباته المحررة المرعية عالما بالخلاف في ذلك واشهد على

27 نفسه الكريمة بذلك في تاريخ باطنه بعد مرور ما عين باطنه

To the Right of the Main Text, Perpendicular

Witnesses and Seal (as on the recto)

Right

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| شهد عليهم بذلك | 1 |
| عبد العزيز الحالولي [؟]... | 2 |

Middle: Seal of ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Akṣarayī

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| المعتمد على الله | 1 |
| العلي عبد الرحمن | 2 |
| الاقصري | 3 |
| الحنبلي | 4 |

Left

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| شهد عليهم بذلك | 1 |
| محمد ابن محمد ابن علم الدين | 2 |

Verso, Upper Right Corner (the Judeo–Arabic filing note)¹⁷

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| אשהאד עלי אולאד בודיר | 1 |
| ן' ביגוס במה עליהום מן | 2 |

¹⁷ My sincere thanks to Professor Dotan Arad and to Alan Elbaum for their assistance in deciphering this text.

גיהת דואן אלמ' [עלם] אברהי' [ם]	3
יצ"ו [=ישמרו צורו ויחייהו] [פי] עאשר רביע אל	4
אול סנה כמה [?]...[אלמב] לג	5
6 \ / ...	6

Verso, Right Column

الحمد لله رب العالمين	1
بالمحكمة الشرعية بالمدرسة المسلمية بثغر دمياط	2
المحروس بعدل اعترف المعلم يوسف	3
المذكور باطنه لشهوده ان المبلغ المسمى باطنه	4
وجملته في الفضة الموصوفة باطنه الف نصف	5
وخمسمائة نصف يستحق ذلك لوالده ابراهيم المذكور	6
دونه ودون كل احد باعترافه بذلك لشهوده	7
اشترى المعلم يعقوب بن يوسف اليهودي [د] ي الربان الكاتب بالديوان بالثغر	8
الوكيل الشرعي عن ابراهيم كاستروا المذكور باطنه بمال موكله المذكور من	9
الفتوين [؟]	

[The first three words of the following line are partially obscured by a crease in the paper.]

10 المذكورين باطنه وهما ابو البقا وابو العز المذكوران باطنه القائمان

[The last several words of the following line are also partially obscured.]

- 11 في البيع الاتي ذكره فيه عن انفسهما وعن بقية [؟] ورثة والدهما المذكور باطنه
- 12 فباعاه لموكله ابراهيم المذكور ما هو بيدهما ويبد ورثة والدهما وفي تصرفهم
- 13 باعترافهما بذلك لشهودها [؟] وهو جميع الحصة التي قدرها النصف والرابع ثمانية
- 14 عشر سهما كاملا من جميع المركب المقررة المجرة ببحيارات تنيس واطرافه من
- 15 عدتها المعينة يسرته المعلوم ذلك عندهم العلم شرعي...اشترا
- 16 شرعيا بثمان جملته من الفضة العثمانية القطع الكبار الف نصف ومائة نصف
- 17 وخمسة وستون نصفا عينا حالا برئت منه الذمة البراة الشرعية بالطريق
- 18 الشرعي بمقتضى المواضعة الشرعية بما يستحق ابراهيم كاستروا المذكور من الاخوين
- 19 المذكورين بني بدر الدين المسمى باطنه المواضعة الشرعية بالطريق [ال]شرعي وذلك بموافقة شرعية
- 20 جرت [بينهم] في ذلك بايجاب وقبول وتسلم وتسليم شرعي وصار كامل
- 21 المركب المذكور وعدته مشتركا بين ابراهيم المذكور وبين سليمان بن ابي الحسن
- 22 الجربلي المراكبي بالتفاصيل على ما تبين فيه ما هو لابراهيم المذكور من
- 23 الحصة المعينة اعلاه وما هو لسليمان المذكور حصة قدرها الربع من المركب وعدته

- 24 المعينة يسرته واعترف المعلم يعقوب المذكور برائه الاخوين المذكورين من يد لموكله
- 25 المذكور من باقي المبلغ المسمى باطنه البراة الشرعية بالطريق شرعا براءة قبض واستيفا
- 26 شرعيين ولم يتاخر له من ذلك شي قل ولا جل ثم اقر يعقوب المذكور وهو بمجرد
- 27 فريق اول فيما ياتي ذكره فيه والاخوان المذكوران وهما فريق ثان بالاقرار [ال] شرعي
- 28 ان كل فريق منهما لا يستحق ولا يستوجب قبل الفريق الاخر وزاد يعقوب المذكور في
- 29 اقراره انه لا يستحق على بدير ووالده بيغوس المذكور لموكله المذكور حقا ولا استحقاقا
- 30 ولا دعوى ولا طلبا بوجه ولا سبب ولا فضة ولا ذهب ولا فلوسا
- 31 ولا قبضا ولا اقباضا ولا حسابا ولا غلطا فيه لا جهالا ولا نسيانا ولا
- 32 ذهولا ولا الزاما ولا دعوى بذلك ولا علقه ولا تبعة ولا يمينا بالله تعالى
- 33 ولا شيا قل ولا جل لسالف الزمان والى تاريخه والزم ابو البقا وابو العز المذكورين
- 34 اعلاه في ذمتهم وما لهما انه متى قام قائم شرعي وطالب يعقوب المذكور او موكله

- 35 المذكور بحق مالي بسبب الحصة المذكورة اعلاه وثبت ذلك عليهما او على احدهما الثبوت
- 36 الشرعي والزمه بالدفع ودفع كان عليهما القيام له بكل ما يدفع بالغ ما بلغ الزاما
- 37 شرعيا مقبولا باعترافهم بذلك لشهوده وتصادقهم على التصديق [ال] شرعي
- 38 شهد مولانا [؟] بالتوكيل في ال... والحكم به في ثاني شهر جمادة [ال] اول
- 39 سنة خمس واربعين وتسعة مائة

Witnesses and Seal

Right

- 1 شهد
- 2 عبد العزيز الحالولي [؟]...

Middle

- 1 شهد
- 2 محمد ابن محمد ابن علم الدين

To the Immediate Left

Seal, presumably of Abī al- Baqā' Muḥammad al-Dumyāṭī, largely illegible and partially obscured by a heavy pen stroke in the line above.

Left

شهد عليهم [؟]	1
بذلك	2
محمد ابن ...	3

3.0. Textual Notes

Recto, Main Text

7. الصحة والسلامة والطوعية والاختيار ‘health, well-being, free will, and choice’: For this terminology, see Little (1984, 189, 379); Tillier and Vanthieghem (2024, 439, 440). See also Ch. 4, Doc. 2, recto l. 3, for an extended form of this terminology; Ch. 4, Doc. 4, recto l. 8, for a shorthand reference to it; and Ch. 5, Doc. 1, recto l. 14, for a much-abbreviated version.
11. اقر ‘They acknowledged’: The scribe leaves a lengthy space between the ق and the ر to signal, at long last, the beginning of a new sentence.
15. حقا ولا استحقاقا ‘[no] right, no entitlement’: The next five lines consist of legal verbiage, some form of which appears in many court documents of this kind, conveying that one party has no claim in any conceivable scenario. For parallel examples, see Little (1998, 130–31); Mallat (2007, 65), although the strings of negatives do not appear in the Mamluk-era examples. Similar verbiage in Hebrew appears in T-S 13J4.21, a contract from 1588, transcribed in Shochetman (1983, 404–5).

Verso, Left Column, Main Text

9. حبل 'ropes' [?]: This is perhaps an unorthodox plural for حبل, 'rope' (conventional plural حبال).
9. الحراس 'the tiller' [?]: This is perhaps a colloquial pronunciation or a mistranscription of حارث, 'tiller'. A literal translation of the phrase موجهي الحارث would be 'rudder of the tiller'. The tiller is connected to the rudder (موجه), which it turns, causing the boat to move.
9. مدمين 'caulked' [?]: Perhaps the connotation is that the hull is caulked, which would be typical for a wooden boat. In that case, this adjective could be related to مدموم, 'smeared'.
10. قرا [ط] 'lamp': Alternatively, this word could be قران (*qirān*), a fastening rope.
10. قلعيات 'sails' [?]: This is perhaps an unorthodox plural for قلع 'sail' (conventional plural قلع or قلاع).
11. داومان 'rigging' [?]: See Alhazmi (2015, 88).
12. بوص [لة] 'compass': Alternatively, it could be read as فرجا (ر), an Arabicisation of the Persian word for 'compass'.

Verso, Upper Right Corner

5. קמה is the Hebrew equivalent of 145. Here, it would be understood to follow the letter ת, the Hebrew equivalent of 400 (the largest number that can be expressed by a single Hebrew letter), written twice, to yield 945 (400 + 400 + 145), the *hijri* date. This was a common means of writing dates in Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic in Ottoman-era Genizah

documents. My thanks to Professor Esther-Miriam Wagner for this insight.

6. The 'V' shape is a notation denoting 1,000.

Verso, Right Column

24. من يد لموكله 'on behalf of his employer': The ل before موكله is probably a scribal error. The phrase should read من يد موكله.
29. استحقاقا '[no] right, no entitlement': The next four lines consist of legal verbiage, differing in slight details from that on the recto.
36. الزمه 'if he should compel him': This may also read الزم, but الزمه makes more sense syntactically.

4.0. Translation

Recto

The judge 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Aḫṣarāyī's *'alāma*:

1. Praise be to God, and he is sufficient to me; may his enviers perish.
2. Entrusted to him [?] is the poor one, 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Aḫṣarāyī the Ḥanbalī,
3. entrusted with rendering justice in Damietta and its district.

Main Text

1. In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate. Trust [in God] [?].
2. In the law court at the Musallamiyya madrasa in the port of Damietta the well-protected, before our master, the poor slave in need of God the exalted, the shaykh, the most evident imam,
3. the knowledgeable, the erudite, the ornament of religion, the glory of the *‘ulamā’*, unique among the favoured, the indisputable mufti, Abī Hurayra ‘Abd al-Raḥman
4. al-Akṣarāyī the Ḥanbalī, the great deputy judge¹⁸ in the aforementioned port, may God the exalted support his judgements and favour him with probity.
5. The two full brothers Abū al-Baqā’ and Abū al-‘Izz, sons of the late Badr al-Dīn, [also] known as Budayr, son of the late al-Shihābī
6. Aḥmad, [also] known as Bīghos (Bey) al-Ḥaramī, their grandfather, in Ghayd al-Naṣāra in the aforementioned port, and Mu‘allim Joseph the son of Mu‘allim Abraham Castro,

¹⁸ For this meaning of *khalīfat al-ḥukm*, see Little (1984, 9). The term is synonymous with *nā’ib*, which would become the customary term for a deputy judge later in the Ottoman period.

7. the current *‘āmil*¹⁹ of the aforementioned port, who is trusted by the two of them, reached a legal agreement while in a state of health, well-being, free will, and choice, that that to which
8. the aforementioned Mu‘allim Joseph is entitled—that is owed by Abī al-Baqā’ and Abī al-‘Izz, mentioned above, of [?]...the legal tax farm
9. to their aforementioned father Budayr, or to their aforementioned grandfather Aḥmad Bighos, of legal debts prior to this date and from enterprises among them—
10. totals, in large Ottoman silver coins current in Egypt now, 1000 *niṣf* [*fiḍḍa*] and 500 *niṣf* legal liability,
11. by legal means, by way of exigible debt.²⁰ Abū al-Baqā’ and Abū al-‘Izz, mentioned above, and they are the first party in what is to be mentioned,
12. and the aforementioned Mu‘allim Joseph, and he is by himself the second party to the legal settlement, acknowledged in a legal acknowledgement that neither party

¹⁹ *‘Āmil* was a district administrator in late Mamluk and early Ottoman Egypt and Yemen. Here, the tax farmer of Damietta’s revenues is intended.

²⁰ Exigible debt was payable on demand. For this terminology and the concept, see Rapoport (2005, 65); Alsabagh (2016, 343); Halawi and Voguet (2020, 339, 349).

13. is entitled to [anything] or has any right to [anything] from the other after this. The aforementioned Mu'allim Joseph added to his acknowledgement that he was not
14. entitled, on his own behalf or that of his father the aforementioned Abraham, [to anything more] from the first party or from the debt of the aforementioned Budayr or the debt of his father
15. Aḥmad Bighos or any of their heirs, [no] right, no entitlement, no claim, no demand in any manner or [for any] reason,
16. not in silver, gold, or copper, not by seizure or confiscation, not by account or by an error in one, not in ignorance or
17. forgetfulness or absentmindedness, not through debt or in cash, not by testament, not by borrowing, not through coercion, no claim to this,
18. nothing at all, a little or much, great or humble, blameworthy or trustworthy, directly or through an agent [?], fixed
19. or mobile, of whatever type or kind or description, not in valuables and not by liability, not by swearing
20. by God the exalted, nothing, not a little nor much, from previous times to the present day, except for what was owed to the aforementioned Joseph by Abī al-Baqā'

21. and Abi al-ʿIzz, mentioned above, and that is the amount agreed to above and the items of pledge that will be enumerated on the right of the verso,²¹
22. which he pledged today to his heirs on that basis. Each party released the debt, hand, and pledge of the other
23. for all the valuables, liabilities, claims, demands, and obligatory oaths—a legal, definitive, firm, final release,
24. ...overriding all rights, claims, and oaths before this date and until this date, except for those named above. Each of the two parties accepted.

Right Margin, Perpendicular

1. This is the interpretation [?] of the other party, a legal acceptance with their acknowledgement of [all] this before the [lit., 'its'] witnesses and their agreement to the legal agreement. When this was completed with their testimony, as explained above, and it was certified
2. before our lord the ..., the ..., the master, mentioned above—those mentioned above testifying for themselves according to what is attributed to them above in the text and language above, in a legal certification of attested testimony, a sound, legal certification—
3. he ruled, may God the exalted support his judgements and favour him, according to the testimony of each of them—a

²¹ These are actually enumerated on the left of the verso.

sound, legal, complete, considered, satisfactory, responsible ruling

4. on that [matter], fulfilling the written and claimed conditions and obligations of the *sharīʿa*, cognisant of the [potential for a] contradictory [ruling] on it.²² He bore witness his noble self to this on the 10th of Rabīʿ I 945 [6 August 1538].

Witnesses

Right

ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Ḥālūlī [?] ... bore witness to that for them.

Middle: Seal of ʿAbd al-Raḥman al-Aḫṣarayī

The one who relies on //God// the exalted, ʿAbd al-Raḥman/al-Aḫṣarāyī/al-Ḥanbalī

Left

Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlam al-Dīn bore witness to that for them.

Verso, Left Column

The judge Abū al-Baqāʾ Muḥammad al-Dumyāṭī's *ʿalāma*:

Praise to God ... until his Day of Judgement.

²² For this wording, see Little (1998, 160, 168).

Main Text

1. Praise be to God.
2. In the law court referenced on the recto,
3. Abū al-Baqā' and Abū al-‘Izz, mentioned on the recto,
pledged to the possession of Mu‘allim Joseph,
4. mentioned on the recto, by way of security for the amount
mentioned on the recto and for every part of it until
5. the time of its legal repayment, that which is in their hands
and in their possession, and the two of them testified to this
with their acknowledgement
6. before the [lit., ‘its’] witnesses, namely, the entire share
whose quantity is the half and the quarter,
7. 18 full shares of the entirety of the boat that customarily
sails in the lakes of
8. Tinnīs, which is described [as follows:]—its height from its
base is eleven cubits,²³
9. made fast with ropes [?], with a tiller with a rudder [?],
caulked [?] at the hull. A portion of the aforementioned
share [consists]
10. of its equipment, namely, a mast to which are attached a
ballast of sea water and a lamp and sails [?]
11. and pieces/units of bolts [?] and //rigging [?]/ and an
anchor made of nail-iron and four oars in ...

²³ In Egypt, the ‘local cubit’ (*dirā‘ baladī*) was equivalent to 0.58 metres.

[Much of the following line is obscured by a fold.]

12. and four punting-poles and a quadrant [?] and a compass
[?] on which are [inscribed] the [cardinal] directions and
the surroundings
13. and the wind currents, known to them by legal
knowledge—a sound, legal, accepted, received pledge,
14. delivered with permission, customary,
15. for benefit from it through the transfer of authority over
the aforementioned pledge according to his [the judge's]
ruling on it,
16. with their acknowledgement of that before the [lit., 'its']
witnesses and their turning it over to him [Joseph]. When
this was completed
17. with their testimony, as explained above, and there was
certified before our lord the humble slave
18. to God the exalted, the shaykh, the imam, the know-
ledgeable, the erudite, the majesty of religion,
19. glory of the *'ulamā'*, unique among the favoured, the
indisputable mufti, Abī al-Baqā' Muḥammad al-Dumyātī
20. al-Shāfi'ī, the noble deputy judge in the port mentioned on
the recto, may God the exalted support his judgements
21. and favour him—those mentioned above testifying for
themselves according to what is attributed to them above
22. in the text and language above, the certification according
to attested testimony—

23. he ruled, may God the exalted support his judgements and favour him, according to
24. the testimony of each of them—a sound, legal,
25. complete, considered, satisfactory, responsible ruling, fulfilling the written and claimed conditions
26. of the *shari‘a*, cognisant of the [potential for a] contradictory [ruling] on it. He bore witness
27. his noble self to this on the date on the recto after the passing of what was specified on the recto.

To the Right of the Main Text, Perpendicular

Witnesses and Seal (as on the recto)

Right

‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Ḥālūlī [?] ... bore witness to that for them.

Middle: Seal of ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Akṣarayī

The one who relies on //God// the exalted, ‘Abd al-Raḥman/al-Akṣarāyī/al-Ḥanbalī

Left

Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alam al-Dīn bore witness to that for them.

Verso, Upper Right Corner (the Judeo–Arabic filing note)

1. Attestation to the sons of Budayr
2. [ib]n Bīghos of [the claim] against them on
3. the part of the customs of [i.e., headed by] Mu‘[allim] Abraha[m],
4. may his Rock protect and revitalise him, [on] the tenth of Rabī‘ al-
5. Awwal in the year 145 [?], the [amo]unt
6. ... 1,500

Verso, Right Column

1. Praise to God, the lord of the universe.
2. In the law court in the Musallamiyya Madrasa in the port of Damietta
3. the well-protected in justice, Mu‘allim Joseph,
4. mentioned on the recto, acknowledged before the [lit., ‘its’] witnesses, that the amount named on the recto,
5. whose total, in the silver coins described on the recto, is 1,000 *niṣf* [*fiḏḏa*]
6. and 500 *niṣfs*, belongs to his father, the aforementioned Abraham,
7. rather than to him [i.e., Joseph] or anyone else, as he acknowledged to the [lit., ‘its’] witnesses.

8. Mu'allim Ya'qūb [i]bn Yūsuf the Rabbanite Jew, the scribe of the *dīwān* in the port,
9. and the legal agent on behalf of Abraham Castro, mentioned on the recto, purchased with the money of his aforementioned employer [lit., the one who made him agent] from the aforementioned two young men [?]

[The first three words of the following line are partially obscured by a crease in the paper.]

10. mentioned on the recto, namely, Abū al-Baqā' and Abū al-‘Izz, mentioned on the recto, undertaking

[The last several words of the following line are also partially obscured.]

11. the sale, to be mentioned in it [the record], on their own behalf and on behalf of the other [?] heirs of their father, mentioned on the recto:
12. the two of them sold it to his [Ya'qūb's] employer, the aforementioned Abraham, that which was in their possession and in the possession of their father's heirs and theirs [the heirs'] to dispose of,
13. with the acknowledgement of the two of them before the [lit., 'its'] witnesses, and it [i.e., what is in their possession] is all of the share amounting to the half and the quarter, 18
14. complete shares of the entirety of the boat that customarily sails in the lakes of Tinnīs and vicinity,
15. with its equipment, specified on the left, known to them by legal knowledge ... a legal purchase

16. for a price whose total is in the transaction completed in large Ottoman silver pieces: 1,000 *niṣf* [*fiḍḍa*] and 100 *niṣfs*
17. and sixty-five *niṣfs* in current cash. A release of liability was granted from him, a legal release by the legal path
18. by the necessity of a legal agreement regarding what the aforementioned Abraham Castro is entitled to from the two aforementioned brothers,
19. sons of Badr al-Dīn, named on the recto, the legal agreement in the legal path, and that is by legal agreement
20. that occurred between them in this, by offer and receipt and legal delivery. The entire aforementioned
21. boat and its equipment came to be shared between the aforementioned Abraham and Sulaymān [i]bn Abī al-Ḥasan
22. al-Jarbālī the boatman, specifically, as explained in it [the document], that which belongs to the aforementioned Abraham from
23. the share specified above, and that which belongs to the aforementioned Sulaymān, a share amounting to one quarter of the boat and its equipment,
24. specified on the left. The aforementioned Muʿallim Yaʿqūb acknowledged his release of the two aforementioned brothers on behalf of his aforementioned employer [i.e., Abraham],
25. from the remainder of the amount named on the recto, the legal release by the legal path, a release of legal taking possession and receiving payment,

26. legally, and nothing remained to him [Abraham] of that,²⁴ not a little and not much. Then the aforementioned Ya'qūb acknowledged, and he by himself
27. is the first party in what will be mentioned in it [the acknowledgement], and the aforementioned two brothers, and they are the second party in the legal acknowledgement,
28. that neither of the two parties deserves or is entitled to [anything] from the other party. The aforementioned Ya'qūb added, in
29. his acknowledgement, that his aforementioned employer [i.e., Abraham] has no claim against Budayr and his father, [no] right, no entitlement,
30. no claim, no demand in any manner or [for any] reason, not in silver, gold, or copper,
31. not by seizure or confiscation, not by account or by an error in one, not in ignorance or forgetfulness, not
32. in absentmindedness, not by coercion or claim to it, not in valuables and not by liability, not by swearing by God the exalted,
33. nothing, not a little nor much, from previous times to the present day. He [Ya'qūb] enjoined Abū al-Baqā' and Abū al-'Izz, mentioned

²⁴ I.e., Abraham forgives the remaining 335 *nišfs* of the debt.

34. above, in their possessions and in their money, that if a legal claimant should sue Ya‘qūb or his aforementioned employer [i.e., Abraham]
35. for any financial right pertaining to the share mentioned above, and if this should be proven against both of them or against either one of them with a legal proof,
36. and if he [the hypothetical claimant] should compel him [Ya‘qūb or Abraham] to pay, and he paid, then it was incumbent on both of them to repay him [Ya‘qūb or Abraham] all that he had paid, no matter the amount—a legal enjoining,
37. accepted with their acknowledgement of this before the [lit., ‘its’] witnesses and their agreement upon the legal agreement.
38. Our lord [?, i.e., the judge] bore witness to the granting of power of attorney²⁵ in the ... and the judgement on it was on the second of the month of Jumādā [al-]Awwal
39. of the year 945 [26 September 1538].

Witnesses and Seal

Right

‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Ḥālūlī [?] ... bore witness.

²⁵ Here, Ya‘qūb’s acting as agent for Abraham is meant.

Middle

Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alam al-Dīn bore witness.

To the Immediate Left

Seal, presumably of Abī al-Baqā’ Muḥammad al-Dumyāṭī, largely illegible and partially obscured by a heavy pen stroke in the line above.

Left

Muḥammad ibn ... bore witness to them [?].

Plate I: CAJS Halper 359, recto. University of Pennsylvania Libraries.
Public domain.

<https://openn.library.upenn.edu/Data/0002/html/h359.html>.



Plate II: CAJS Halper 359, verso. University of Pennsylvania Libraries.
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DOCUMENT 2: T-S NS 297.6

COMPETITION OVER DAMIETTA'S CUSTOMS IN THE LATE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

1.0. Discussion

This letter, in Ottoman Turkish, dates from at least half a century after the convoluted Abraham Castro debt case. It deals with competition over revenue-collection rights for Damietta's customs in the context of delivery of the tribute known as *māl-i mīrī*, which Egypt sent to Istanbul each year, usually through Damietta and Alexandria. (This tribute will loom large in Ch. 2, Doc. 3, from Alexandria.) It is written in a rather hasty hand on a sheet of paper that is torn at the upper left and right corners and that has deteriorated around the edges; it is also stained on the left edge and smudged on the right, while the ink has faded significantly. Since the writing runs all the way to the edges of the page, except at the top, these qualities make the document all the more challenging to read. The author is presumably Aḥmed ibn Yūsuf, whose partially illegible seal appears on the document's verso. He appears to be an agent of the newly-appointed tax farmer (Ottoman Turkish, *mültezim*; Arabic, *multazim*) to whom the letter is addressed. The tax farmer thus must not yet have arrived in Damietta; he may be in Cairo.

1.1. Dating the Document

The continuation of the letter that appears upside-down in the document's right-hand margin ends with the date of writing, the only legible parts of which are *Zilka'de ul-ḥarām min...eyn/in ve elf* (Zilka'de [Arabic, Dhī'l-Qa'da] the sacred of ... 10??). Thus, the date could fall anywhere between 1002 AH/1594 CE (*isneyn ve elf* in the Ottomanised Arabic commonly used for document dates) and the 1090s AH/1680s CE (*tis'in ve elf*). The fiscal vocabulary that the document employs is fluid enough to accommodate that entire timespan. Nonetheless, I think that a 1002/1594 date provides the most satisfactory explanation for the personages, terminology, and titlature that appear here.

1.2. Çavuş Bey

Aḥmed's letter addresses the above-mentioned customs tax farmer, whom the author calls 'Çavuş Bey efendim ḥazretleri'. This might seem an implausible string of titles, yet most of them make sense in a late sixteenth- or very early seventeenth-century context. This personage may be a former member of Egypt's Çavuşān regiment, a combined cavalry-infantry corps close to the provincial governor. Sultanīc orders of 972 AH/1564 CE and 984 AH/1576 CE decreed that only members of the Çavuşān and the similarly-positioned Müteferriḳa corps could be promoted to the rank of *sanjāk beyi* (Shaw 1962, 192–96; Hathaway 1997b, 11). The Ottoman governor of Egypt could have named him director of the customs even before his promotion to bey: Çavuşān and Müteferriḳa officers occasionally assumed these positions, which were otherwise held by *dhimmī* merchants, in the early

seventeenth century (Shaw 1962, 103). If the tax farmer holds the positions of *çavuş* and *bey*, then in this string of titles, only *efendim*, the equivalent of ‘sir’, and *hazretleri*, ‘his excellency’, are purely honorifics.

The document’s author refers to Çavuş Bey not as the holder of the *muqāṭa‘a* of Damietta’s customs but as the *mültezim*, holder of an *iltizām*, or tax farm. This variant terminology is understandable, though, for in practice, *muqāṭa‘a* and *iltizām* were synonymous; historically, *muqāṭa‘a* referred to the purchase price that the holder paid for the tax farm, as opposed to the tax farm itself (Bosworth and Gerber 1993). Regardless of the term used, the holder purchased revenue-collection rights for a substantial sum of money and sought to recoup the purchase price from the revenue source. As the research of Mohsen Shuman has shown (1995, esp. 19–23), tax farming, particularly of urban revenues, was commonplace in Egypt as early as the 1520s.

1.3. Ḥusām Re’īs and Ḥusrevzāde Meḥmed Bey

The villain of the document is one Ḥusām Re’īs, the former director of Damietta’s customs operations, who, the letter implies, will not allow the agents of his replacement to do their work. His title, *re’īs*, indicates that he is one of the *deryā beyis*, or naval captains, who, as the chapter introduction explains, governed the Mediterranean ports before the 1670s and, in that capacity, held the tax farms of the port customs.

This Ḥusām is an agent (Ottoman Turkish, *vekīl*) of Ḥusrevzāde (‘son of Ḥusrev’) Meḥmed Bey, another of whose

agents, the document tells us, is installed in Suez. The only Ḥusrevzāde Meḥmed Bey, or Meḥmed Bey ibn Ḥusrev, in Ottoman Egypt of whom I am aware was the son of one Ḥusrev Pasha, possibly Köse Ḥusrev Pasha, a palace-trained official of indeterminate origin who governed several key eastern Anatolian and Syrian provinces before being killed in the 1587 Ottoman campaign against Safavid Iran.²⁶ His presumed son, Meḥmed Bey, was close to the Ottoman governor Ibrāhīm Pasha, who arrived in Egypt in 1603; both the governor and the bey were murdered by rebellious soldiers in an infamous 1604 insurrection (al-Iṣḥāqī [early seventeenth century], *Akḥbār al-uwal*, 163–64; Hathaway 2009, 100). If this Ḥusrevzāde Meḥmed is indeed Ḥusām Re'īs' patron, then our document should by all rights predate his death. Thus, 1002 AH/1594 CE makes sense, although a date as late as the 1020s AH/1610s CE (...*‘iṣrīn ve elf*) is also plausible if we assume that Ḥusrevzāde Meḥmed's clients would still have wielded influence after his death.

1.4. Ḥūrīya

Even though the letter's author refers to the *çavuş* as *mültezim* and implies that Ḥusām Re'īs preceded him as holder of his *iltizām*, he goes on to recount giving the *iltizām* to the woman Ḥūrīya, a 'comber', presumably of flax, which grew abundantly in the Egyptian countryside (Goitein 1967, 455–57, n. 61; Hathaway 1994, 302, 305–6). Here, the author is probably describing the subcontracting of the tax farm to a *dhimmi* merchant, who, as the

²⁶ Süreyya (1261–1327 AH/1845–1909 CE; *Sicill-i ‘Oṣmānī*, II:273); Necipoğlu (2005, 459–62).

chapter introduction notes, received the title *amīn* (*emīn* in Turkish orthography). Someone named Ḥūrīya (‘Angel’ or ‘Houri’) could have been a Muslim, Jew, or Christian, but was probably Jewish or Christian, given the customary profile of flax workers. Flax-combing, or hatcheling, the process of disentangling and cleaning the plant’s fibres prior to spinning yarn from them, was an intensive and time-consuming operation that determined the quality of the yarn and thus of the finished linen cloth.²⁷ While linen-weavers in Egypt were overwhelmingly Coptic Christians, Jews had historically found niches in flax-processing and cloth-dyeing.²⁸

To buy a tax farm, however, Ḥūrīya would have had to be wealthy. Even if, as the letter implies, she went into debt to make the purchase, she did so because the tax farm was subject to a *ziyāde*: an increase in the customs duties due to the imperial treasury, and thus an increase in the purchase price of the tax farm, because of unusually heavy trade through the port (Shaw 1962, 102). She may have started out as a flax-comber; by the time this letter was composed, she may have overseen a flax-processing establishment (Hathaway 1994, 302, 303, 305–6). She may have traded flax, as well. She would have been an influential force in Damietta’s economic life, perhaps not unlike al-Wuḥsha, the Jewish broker documented in the medieval Genizah corpus and memorably described by S.D. Goitein in *A Mediterranean Society* (Goitein 1978, 346–52). If so, then she may

²⁷ Girard (1765–1836; *Mémoire*, 99–102, 213); Goitein (1967, 105).

²⁸ Goitein (1967, 72, 84, 87, 92, 100, 105, 365–66); Hathaway (2020, 188).

be the reason why this document found its way to the Genizah. As customs *mültezim*, her chief duty may have been pledging a sum of money as surety against the value of the *māl-i mīrī*, although she would also have been in a position to supply some of the flax that is mentioned among the goods in the tribute.

1.5. Shipping the *Māl-i mīrī*

At the heart of the letter-writer's complaint against Ḥusām Re'īs is the timely shipment to Istanbul of the *māl-i mīrī*, for which the customs directors of the Mediterranean ports bore a disproportionate share of responsibility. The writer accuses Ḥusām Re'īs of delaying the *māl-i mīrī* by refusing to turn over his accounts to his replacement's representatives and interfering in local fiscal assignments critical to the assemblage and dispatch of the provisions: that of Ḥūrīya and that of the *muḥtasib*, the official charged with keeping order in the public marketplace and regulating prices, weights, and quality of goods (Hathaway 2020, 141–42). His intransigence is preventing nine shiploads of provisions from leaving Damietta's customs *divān* (root of the French *douane*, 'customs'), a kind of station where ships were inspected and duties paid.

The actual task of assembling the *māl-i mīrī*, under the supervision of the *muḥtasib*, was assumed by Sayyid Aḥmad, a Janissary and purported descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad, and Damietta's *naqībs*, a title that is often associated with the head of the local population of descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad (*naqīb al-ashrāf*) but that can also refer more broadly to community leaders, such as the heads of the craft

organisations, or *aşnāf* (Turkish, *eşnāf*) (Uyar 2006). As to the provisions themselves, they comprise spices that have no doubt come from India and southeast Asia through the Red Sea; slaves, probably conducted overland to Cairo from Sudan (Hathaway 2018a, 29–30); henna, the dye derived from the leaves of a tree native to Egypt; flax, certainly from the Egyptian countryside; and the legendary Damietta rice, a small-grain rice that was actually grown in villages in the port city's hinterland (Evliyā, *Seyāḥatnāme*, 389, 390, 397; Shaw 1962, 274).

The marginal continuation of the letter reveals that the great and the good of Damietta have informed the letter-writer that his patron, the new tax farmer of the customs, does indeed have jurisdiction over the ships carrying the *māl-i mīrī* so long as they are inside the 'strait' (Turkish, *boğaz*), meaning the point, flanked by two towers, where the Nile meets the Mediterranean (Pīrī Re'īs [d. 960 AH/1553 CE], Map of Damietta). Only if they are outside the strait, in Damietta's harbour or in the Nile, can the previous tax farmer, namely Ḥusām Re'īs, take charge of them.²⁹ This presumably means that the letter-writer should have been able to dispatch the ships, all of which had already paid their customs dues, to Istanbul. Yet Ḥusām refuses to concede, prompting the letter-writer to beg the Çavuş Bey for a formal order demanding that he allow the ships to proceed.

²⁹ The document refers to the current tax farmer as *mültezim* and the previous tax farmer as *emīn*, even though the previous *emīn* should by all rights be Ḥūrīya.

1.6. Friday and Saturday

A tangential issue is that of the ‘two-day account’ for Friday and Saturday, the two days before the letter-writer arrived in Damietta on Sunday morning. This practice could conceivably have stemmed from the closure of the port customs over the Jewish sabbath, from sundown Friday to nightfall Saturday, because of the prevalence of Jewish customs administrators in Egypt’s Mediterranean ports. Such sabbath closures were the norm in Ottoman Salonica (Thessaloniki) in the sixteenth century (Goodblatt 1952, 9), while eighteenth-century Aleppo witnessed ‘an almost universal stagnation of trade’ on the Jewish sabbath for similar reasons (Russell [ca. 1715–68], *Natural History*, II:78–79). Thus the writer may have been unable even to attempt to start his work until Sunday morning. Conceivably, his own ship may have been unable to dock and unload until then.

2.0. Text

Paper, top corners torn away. Measurements unavailable.

Recto

1. Devletlü ve sa‘âdetlü sulṭānım bender-i Dimyāṭ mültezimi faḥru’l-emāşil ve zühürü’l-aḳrān çavuş bey efendim ḥazretleri[nin ḥāk-ı pāy-ı şeriflerine]
2. yüz sürdükden [şoñra], ma‘rüz-ı bende-i bî-miḳdār budur ki ḥāliyā sulṭānım ḥazretlerinin ‘ālî himmetinize berekâtiyle mübârek Eḥad

3. günü ‘ale’ş-şabāḥ iskele-i Dimyāṭ’a sıḥḥat ve selāmet ile vuşūl buldukda, bi-ḥikmet-i şerīfe ḥük-m-i şerīfi alub, okudub, ve sicillātına [?]
4. kayd olundukdan soñra nidā’ olunub, ba‘dehu mübārek Cum‘a günü ve Sebt günü iki günlük muḥāsebesin su‘āl ü tefahḥuş
5. olundukda bunda Ḥusrevzāde Meḥmed Bey’in vekīli olan kimesne—[ki] Bender-i Süveys rüesā’larından olub sābıkā bunda lifi
6. keyl ḥizmeti üzerine birkaç yıldır ki ta’yīn olunmuş idi. Ḥusām Re’is dimekle meşhūr ve ma‘rūf olan kimesnedir;
7. zıkr olan lif ḥizmetinden ref‘ olunub, şimdilik Ḥusrevzāde Meḥmed Bey’in Dimyāṭ’da vekīli olub—kendüden mübārek Zī’l-ka‘de’nin
8. yigirmi beşinden ḥük-m-i şerif tāriḥine göre vārid ve şadır ḥesābın taleb olundukda ašlā ve kaṭ‘ā uğratmıyub, inkārdan
9. gelüb, ḥattā Dimyāṭ’da muḥtesib olan Ramazān Re’is nām kimesneye māni‘ olub, muḥtesibliği aldırmıyub, fużülluk
10. tariḫiyle mezbūr Ramazān’a ‘Nedir ki bize elli bin pāra deyni vardır tā ki kendüden elli bin pārayı ḥalāş etmeyince
11. muḥtesib olmaz’ deyü māni‘ ve dāfi‘ olmuşdur. İki günden soñra emānet[en] bir mustakīm kimesne Seydī Aḥmed Yeñiçeri
12. naķibler ile muḥtesiblikde gezeyor, mālın cem‘ ideyor. Ba‘dehu bir māşiṭa Ḥürīye dimekle ma‘rūf ‘avret

13. sâbıkā mültezim idi gelüb, bizden iltizâmı ziyâde ile qabûl eyledüğü ecilden ana dağı mezbûr Hüsâm Re'îs mâni'
14. ve dâfi' olub, 'Nedir ki bize borcu vardır? Biz habs ideriz, tâ ki deyni virsün, andan şöñra iltizâm eylesün'
15. deyü ana dağı mâni' olsa gerek idi, lakin biz sözüne iltifât ve i'tibâr eylemedik ve maḥkemede 'arz olduğı ma'lûmları
16. olmuştur. El-ḥāsılı mezbûr Hürîye'ye iltizâm eyledik ve-lakin benim sultânım, ḥesâb eyledik, gördük ki toköz geminin yüki
17. eğer piriñ ve bahâr ve kıñâ ve kettân ve gyün [?] ve raqîk cümlesi şâdır olub, gemileri henüz dağı dîvân altında bağı turuyor,

[Smudging obscures the ends of the next two lines.]

18. cümlesinin yükinin gümrüğün alub, ellerine mühürlü birer kâğıd yazub, 'nedir ki vuşıldır' deyü vermişlerdir. El-ḥāsılı
19. bir kîseye yakın māl taḥşîl olunur. Bizüm ile her gün mücâdele idiyor, ve cümle vilâyetin ḥalkı ...

Right Side, Upside-Down

1. Cevâb virdiler ki 'iskele içinde olan...
2. eğer piriñ ve gayrî cümle şâdır olan nesne mâ dâm ki
3. boğazdan çıkmamış ola, yeni mültezimindir, meğer boğazdan
4. taşra bulunmuş ola ana söz yokdur, eski
5. emînindir' deyü vilâyet ḥalkı ve ehl-i ḥaber ve ehl-i vukûf

6. cümlesi şöylece cevāb virdiler: aṣlā mezbūr Ḥusām
7. Re’is iltifāt eylemedi ve i’tibār itmedi, ‘Nedir ki
8. ben alayım, siz daḥi ṣafānuz var ise, alun’
9. deyü kânūndan ḥāric ...şdiler. Eyle
10. olsa, sultānım ḥazretlerinden ricādır ki bu mektüb
11. vuṣūli buldukda, bir ān ve bir sā‘at ihmāl ve terāḥī
12. itmiyüb, bir muḥkem ve mü’ekked ḥük-m-i şerif []
13. idüb, irsāl idesiz ki ḡāyet ile lāzım
14. zīrā biz []dikleri māl-i mīrī taḥṣīl olunur []
15. [] el-du‘ā []
16. Taḥrīren fī yevmi’l-[] şehir-i Zi’l-ḳa‘de
17. ul-ḥarām min [sene] [] eyn/īn ve elf []

Verso

An upside-down oval seal, divided horizontally with a straight line.

Upper register: illegible

Lower register: El-faḳīr/Aḥmed/ibn Yūsuf

3.0. Textual Note

Recto

12. *naḳībler* ‘*naqībs*’ [community leaders]: On this term, see above, Section 1.5 Shipping the *Māl-i mīrī*.

4.0. Translation

Recto

1. My honoured and esteemed lord, the tax farmer of the port of Damietta, the pride of the exemplary and first among equals, his excellency Çavuş Bey efendim:
2. [After] rubbing [my] face [in the dust under your feet], the report of the worthless slave is as follows: My lord, when I, with blessings for your lofty influence, arrived on blessed Sunday
3. in the morning, safe and sound, at the port of Damietta, by the noble [divine] wisdom, I took out the imperial order and had it read aloud, and after it was recorded in the register,
4. it was proclaimed [publicly]. Afterward, when the two-day account for blessed Friday and Saturday was investigated,
5. we asked the person who serves here as Ḥusrevzāde Meḥmed Bey's agent—who was one of the ship captains of the port of Suez and had previously been
6. appointed to the date palm fibre weighing service here several years earlier. He is a person known as Ḥusām Re'īs;
7. he was removed from the aforementioned palm fibre service and has now become Ḥusrevzāde Meḥmed Bey's agent in Damietta—to give us an account, covering the period from the 25th of Zī'l-ka'de the blessed

8. until the date of the noble order, of all imports and exports, but he absolutely refused to comply, rejecting us
9. and even impeding the [new] market inspector of Damietta, someone named Ramaẓān Reʿīs. He [Ḥusām] did not allow him to take up the market inspectorship, but unjustly
10. hindered and impeded the aforementioned Ramaẓān, saying, ‘Why [does he still] have a debt to us of 50,000 *pāras*? Until he pays the 50,000 *pāras*,
11. he can’t be market inspector’. Two days later, as a [temporary] administrative measure, an upright person, Seyyid Aḥmed the Janissary,
12. is going around³⁰ with the *naqībs*, carrying out the task of market inspection and collecting revenues. Afterward a comber, the woman known as Ḥūrīya,
13. who had previously been the tax farmer, arrived, and because she had accepted the tax farm from us at an increase,³¹ the aforementioned Ḥusām Reʿīs hindered and impeded her, too,
14. saying, ‘Why does she still owe us money? We will imprison [her] until she pays the debt; after that she can farm the taxes [again]’.

³⁰ The Turkish text here switches to the present progressive for one sentence.

³¹ The implication is that she had gone into debt to pay the increased price. On the meaning of the term *ziyāde*, see the section introduction.

15. It would have been necessary for us to stop him [from imprisoning her], but we could not respect his authority and, as you know, we filed a petition in the [law] court [lit., ‘that there was a petition in the [law] court’].
16. Ultimately, we awarded Hūrīya the tax farm,³² but, my lord, we did the accounts and saw that nine shiploads
17. of rice, spices, henna, flax, and a variety [?] and slaves have all been exported, but the ships are still stuck in customs.

[Smudging obscures the ends of the next two lines.]

18. All of their [the ships’] cargo has paid customs, and a sealed document has been given to each [ship], noting what the destination is. In total,
19. nearly one purse of money will be collected. He [i.e., Ḥusām Re’īs] is fighting with us every day, and all the people of the district [were asked how to resolve such an impasse].

Right Side, Upside-Down

1. They replied that ‘so long as in the port ...,
2. all items for export, whether rice or anything else,
3. have not come out of the strait, then they belong to the new tax farmer. But if they are found outside the strait,

³² She was presumably the *dhimmi emīn* who handled day-to-day operations on behalf of the *mültezim*.

4. then he has no right to them; they belong to the former *emīn*'.
5. The people of the district and those with knowledge and information
6. all responded in this manner: that the aforementioned Ḥusām
7. Re'īs never listened to or respected them at all but [acted] contrary to the law, saying 'Why
8. should I take it? If you want it more, you take it'.
9. In light of all this,
10. my request to his excellency my lord is that when this letter
11. arrives, you immediately, without delay,
12. issue a strong and firm noble order []
13. and send it, for it is absolutely necessary
14. because we [] so that the [] *māl-i mīrī* is delivered [].
15. [] prayers []
16. Written on the [] day of the month of Zi'l-ka'de
17. the sacred, in the [year] 10??

Verso

An upside-down oval seal, divided horizontally with a straight line.

Upper register: illegible

Lower register: The poor one/Aḥmed/son of Yūsuf

Plate III: T-S NS 297.6, recto. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

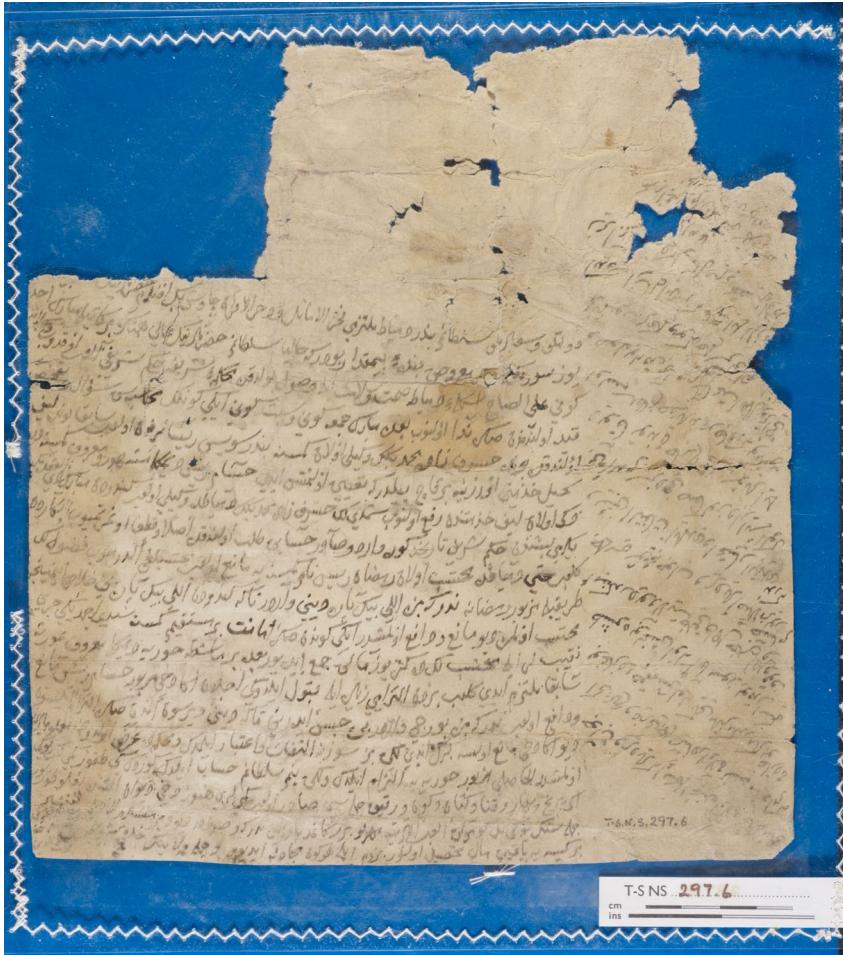
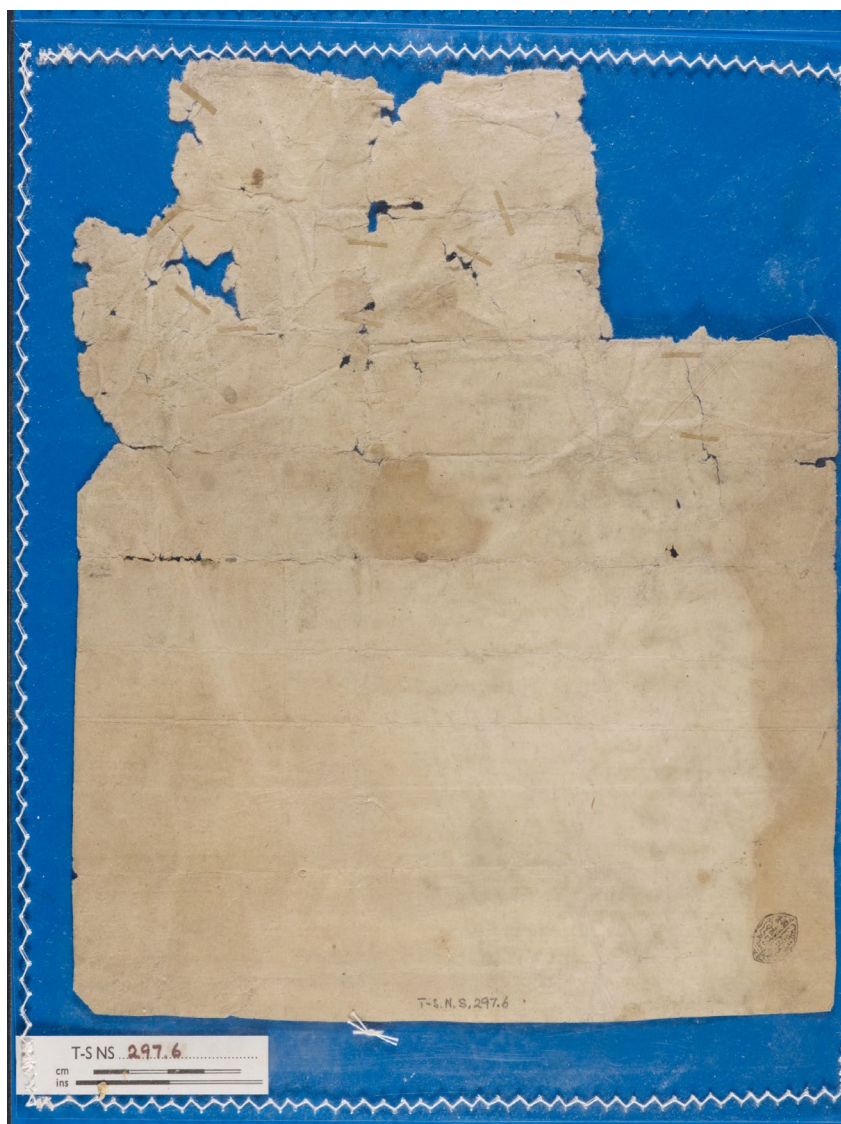


Plate IV: T-S NS 297.6, verso. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



DOCUMENT 3: CAJS HALPER 222

JANISSARIES AND A BEY SUPPORT THE JEWISH ADMINISTRATOR OF DAMIETTA'S CUSTOMS, 1708

1.0. Discussion

1.1. 'Alī Efendi, Author of the Letter

This final Damietta document dates from 1708, some 35 years after Egypt's localised Janissary regiment had seized control of the Mediterranean port customs. The verso is a letter, in Arabic, dated Dhū'l-Qa'da 1119/late January–early February 1708, from the commander (*serdār*) of the local Janissary garrison to a recipient whose name has been cut off along with the top of the document. This *serdār* signs himself 'Alī Efendi. While *efendi* was ordinarily a title for civilian bureaucrats, rather than military officers, it was not uncommon for regimental scribes and similar functionaries to hold that rank. In addition, 'Alī Efendi might have received training in chancery practices or in the religious sciences, either of which would have qualified him for the title.³³

As Damietta's Janissary commander, 'Alī led a roughly 100-man garrison, stationed in the local citadel, that was subordinate

³³ Uzunçarşılı (1945a, I:361, 384–89, 408, 413, 444, 550–51); Hathaway (1997b, 66 n. 56, 67); Altıntaş (2022, 97).

to the director of the port's customs (Crecelius 1990, 186). Evliyā Çelebi, writing in the 1670s, reports that Damietta's garrison comprised a contingent of imperial Janissaries and one from the localised Janissary regiment in Cairo, each with its own *serdār* (Evliyā, *Seyāhatnāme*, 386). 'Alī may have led the localised forces, or he could have been an imperial Janissary who had spent enough time in Damietta to have mastered colloquial Arabic. He is clearly proficient in the provincial dialect, for he employs colloquialisms such as the use of the plural objective pronoun هم in place of the feminine singular ها when referring to a non-human plural antecedent (Liebrenz 2022, 87–89, 92).

Chancery training could explain the distinctive hand in which 'Alī's letter is written: a form of *divānī* script, which was ordinarily reserved for official documents in Ottoman Turkish. His knowledge of this script, if indeed he acted as his own scribe, could also indicate familiarity with written Ottoman Turkish, as could his curious flirtation with a Persian *idāfa* when rendering the title of the Kethüdā al-Waqt (see the transcription of the verso, ll. 4, 7, and Textual Notes).

After composing his letter, 'Alī Efendi seems to have folded it in half vertically, no doubt in preparation for mailing. He presumably wrote the name and location of the recipient, now excised, upside-down on the recto. His seal is visible on the recto, as well. At some later point, however, someone wrote the Hebrew burial prayer known as the Tsiddūḳ ha-Dīn on the part of the

recto bearing the seal.³⁴ I shall discuss this addition at the end of this introduction.

1.2. The Nets

‘Alī’s letter alludes to a dispute between one Mu‘allim Mūsā, certainly the Jewish *amīn* who supervised Damietta’s customs on behalf of the holder of the customs tax farm, and ‘the Christian’ (*al-Naṣrānī*), along with ‘the people’ (*al-nās*), presumably referring to his associates, who may well be fellow Christians. Damietta at the time had a substantial Christian population: Evliyā Çelebi notes one Coptic neighbourhood (Turkish, *maḥalle*), one Jewish, and seven *kefere* (literally, ‘unbeliever’), which here probably refers to non-Coptic, probably Greek Orthodox, Christians (Evliyā, *Seyāḥatnāme*, 389). The Christian mentioned in this letter must have been either Coptic or Greek Orthodox.

This dispute concerns nets (Arabic, *shabābik*), no doubt fishing nets, that the Christian and his allies owe to Mu‘allim

³⁴ See fjms.genizah.org, under Cairo Genizah/Philadelphia/Penn CAJS/Halper 222, ‘Catalog Scans’ and ‘Catalog Records’. ‘Catalog Scans’ reproduces text from Halper (1924, 103). ‘Catalog Records’ reproduces information from the University of Pennsylvania Libraries catalogue; see also <https://colenda.library.upenn.edu/catalog/81431-p3sx64v12>. The Friedberg Jewish Manuscript Society categorises the document as consisting of two folios of two pages each: the Tsiddūḡ ha-Dīn comprises folio 1a, the Arabic letter folio 1b, the blank half of the letter page folio 2a, and the blank half of the Tsiddūḡ ha-Dīn page folio 2b. The University of Pennsylvania Libraries, in contrast, categorise the entire Tsiddūḡ ha-Dīn page as folio 1r and the entire Arabic letter page as folio 1v. Here, I follow the University of Pennsylvania’s system.

Mūsā. The Christian and his associates may be fishermen who ply their trade in Lake Manzala, and perhaps even weavers of fishing nets. As noted in connection with Document 1 in this chapter, fishing in Lake Manzala was a sizeable industry. It was taxed as an imperial tax farm, or *muqāṭaʿa*, administered by the tax farmer (*multazim*) of Damietta's customs and thus, no doubt, collected on his behalf by Muʿallim Mūsā (Shaw 1962, 135, 139). Muʿallim Mūsā may have had an agreement with the Christian to supply him with nets, which perhaps he distributed to other fishermen in connection with his duties as tax-collector.

Complicating matters for Muʿallim Mūsā is the fact that this Christian is a servant (*khaddām*) of the customs *multazim*, Meḥmed Agha, who is certainly the officer appointed to that role by Egypt's governor (Evliyā, *Seyāḥatnāme*, 386, and the introduction to the present chapter). Since Cairo's Janissary regiment had controlled the tax farms of the Mediterranean port customs since 1672, Meḥmed Agha should by all rights be the agha of the Cairo regiment, although that officer by 1708 also filled the role of market inspector (*muḥtasib*) of Cairo (Raymond 1973–74, II:601–6). To assist Muʿallim Mūsā, in any case, ʿAlī Efendi instructs his recipient to obtain letters from four key military administrators, demanding that both ʿAlī and Meḥmed Agha review the Christian's accounts. His plan is apparently to bring pressure to bear on the Christian from these influential personages so that he will deliver the nets that Muʿallim Mūsā needs.

1.3. Cairo's Janissary Officers

Of the letter-writers in question, three—the Kethüdā al-Waqt, Süleymān Odabaşı, and ‘Abdullāh Odabaşı—are officers in Cairo's Janissary corps, underlining the influence that Cairo's Janissaries had in Egypt's Mediterranean ports. The Kethüdā al-Waqt (literally, ‘*kethüdā* of the time’, *vakit kethüdāsi* in Turkish) was the acting deputy commander, appointed each year from the numerous *kethüdās* of the corps (Hathaway 1997b, 56, 58, 81, 84, 85, 87, 176). According to the Egyptian chronicler Aḥmed Çelebi ibn ‘Abd al-Ghani, the Kethüdā al-Waqt in 1120 AH/1708 CE was Parmaksız (‘Fingerless’) Aḥmed Kethüdā. He belonged to Egypt's Faqārī faction, one of two factions—the other being the Qāsimīs—that divided Egypt's military cadres between themselves during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.³⁵

Süleymān and ‘Abdullāh Odabaşıs, for their part, are members of the ẖazdağlı household, a large officer-led conglomeration within Cairo's Janissary corps. Both men are well-documented in chronicles of Ottoman Egypt.³⁶ *Odabaşı*, literally ‘head of the room’ in Turkish, referring to a chamber in the Janissary barracks, was the company commander position in which most members of this household first came to prominence in Cairo's Janissary regiment. Over a number of years, even

³⁵ Aḥmed Çelebi (early eighteenth century; *Awḍaḥ al-ishārāt*, 217, 232, 249–50); Hathaway (2003).

³⁶ al-Ḥallāq (early eighteenth century; *Tārīḥ-i Mıṣr-ı ẖāhire*, fol. 308b); Hathaway (1997b, 22, 28, 72–74, and *passim*).

decades, they worked their way up the ranks to *çavuş*, then *kethüdā*, the deputy commander of the entire regiment (Hathaway 1997b, 38–39, 41–42, 72–87). Like most other Janissary households at this time, and like ‘Fingerless’ Aḥmed Kethüdā, the Ẹazdağlıs belonged to the Faqārī faction.

At the time this letter was written, the Ẹazdağlı household was building hegemony over Cairo’s Janissary regiment in a process that would be virtually complete by 1720. (The Ẹazdağlıs would come to control Egypt overall from roughly 1750 through the 1798 French invasion of the province.) A key part of this hegemony was control of customs revenues from Egypt’s ports, and this letter indicates that these two Ẹazdağlı officers were already pursuing a stake in Damietta’s customs.³⁷

1.4. Yūsuf Bey, the Jewish Convert

The fourth potential letter-writer whom ‘Alī Efendi mentions, the *amīr* Yūsuf Bey, is Yūsuf Bey al-Musulmānī, who was a member of the Faqārī faction though not a member of the Ẹazdağlı household. Among grandees of Egypt, the *nisba* al-Musulmānī ordinarily indicated conversion to Islam from Judaism, and Yūsuf Bey was no exception to this rule. After holding high-ranking officer positions in two of Egypt’s regiments, one of them close to the Ottoman governor, he was promoted to *sanjāk beyi* by the governor in 1107 AH/1695–96 CE. At that rank, he served

³⁷ The household’s founder, Muṣṭafā Kethüdā al-Ẹazdağlı (d. 1115 AH/1704 CE), had held the tax farms of the customs of Damietta, Alexandria, and Būlāq during the 1690s, yet this control did not transfer automatically to his clients. See Raymond (1973–74, II:742–43, 745).

sequentially as governor of the Nile Delta sub-province of Minūfiyya, governor of Jidda, the port of Mecca, then of Mecca itself.³⁸ In 1109/1698, he led a mixed contingent of Egyptian and ‘foreign’ (*ghurabā*) troops in an Ottoman campaign that no chronicler identifies clearly, though it may have been against the Safavids since the Turcophone chronicler ‘Abdülkerim ibn ‘Abdurrahman has the force going to Baghdad.³⁹ In 1705, well after his return, the governor Rāmī Meḥmed Pasha appointed him supervisor of Damietta’s customs as part of an ongoing attempt to rein in the exactions of Cairo’s Janissaries, both in the Mediterranean ports and in the markets of Cairo (Raymond 1973–74, II:624, 626–27, 749–51). Yūsuf’s three-year tenure in the post marked the only time between 1672 and 1760 when Damietta’s customs were not under the control of the Cairo Janissary regiment.

This brief reform era came to an end with Yūsuf’s death in September 1708 (Aḥmed Çelebi, *Awḍaḥ al-ishārāt*, 216; the exact date is 10 Rajab 1120 AH/25 September 1708 CE). None of the contemporary or near-contemporary narrative sources mentions the cause of his death, and even his age is a mystery, as are his

³⁸ Aḥmed Çelebi (*Awḍaḥ al-ishārāt*, 216); al-Damūrdāshī (mid-eighteenth century; *al-Durra al-muṣāna*, 12, 46); al-Jabartī (‘*Ajā’ib al-āthār*, I:117–18, 131); *Zubdat* (late seventeenth century; fols 34a, 36b–37a); Hathaway (2014, 156–57).

³⁹ Al-Jabartī has the force going to ‘Rūm’, but that may simply connote that they mustered in Istanbul before heading east. See ‘Abdülkerim (early eighteenth century; *Tārīḥ-i Mısr*, fols 107b–108a); al-Damūrdāshī (*al-Durra al-muṣāna*, 91); al-Ḥallāq (*Tārīḥ-i Mısr-ı Kāhire*, fol. 237a); al-Jabartī (‘*Ajā’ib al-āthār*, I:131); *Zubdat* (fols 36b–37a).

origins: he may have been a member of Cairo's Jewish community; he may have been a mamluk from the Caucasus who happened to be of Jewish origin (Hathaway 2014, 156). After his death, control of Damietta's customs reverted to Cairo's Janissary officers.

1.5. The Tsiddūḳ ha-Dīn

On the recto of this document is the Tsiddūḳ ha-Dīn (literally, 'affirmation of the [divine] decree'), a traditional Jewish burial prayer compiled from various verses in the Hebrew Tana"kh along with brief passages from the rabbinical oral tradition. It is written in a neat Hebrew hand that is nonetheless a bit challenging from a paleographic standpoint. This Tsiddūḳ ha-Dīn is the Sephardic version, which differs considerably from its Ashkenazi counterpart in the biblical verses it includes. Both versions contain Deut. 32.4, beginning 'The Rock, his work is perfect', but whereas this verse opens the Ashkenazi prayer, it does not appear in the Sephardic prayer until the fifth stanza and is followed by a brief midrashic passage and one from the Mishnah. In this document, however, the stanza beginning with Deut. 32.4 follows two interpolated lines, Ps. 89.49 and Ps. 144.4, that do not form part of the conventional Sephardic Tsiddūḳ ha-Dīn. The document follows the common Sephardic practice of adding two verses from Isaiah at the end of the prayer, here slightly separated from the canonical text. On the other hand, it leaves out the last four and a half lines of Ps. 78.38, along with Ps. 20.10, which concludes the standard additions. Instead, this document adds Isa. 60.20. For unknown reasons, the scribe

has rewritten the word *shalmū* ([your days of mourning] shall be ended), the third to last word in the verse, twice below the final line. So far as the language of the prayer is concerned, it differs from the Masoretic text of the Tana"kh mainly in frequently incorporating a written *vāv* (ו) in place of the diacritic *qamats qatan* (קמץ קטן) written beneath a consonant to indicate the phoneme /o/.

If this document dated from the 'classical' Genizah era, we would assume that the letter happened to be written on the blank side of the paper containing the prayer, or vice versa. However, Ottoman-era Genizah documents tend not to exhibit the reuse of paper common among medieval Genizah documents: the verso of a document is usually either blank or connected to the recto. Although the top of the letter on this document's verso is cut off, the rest of the text, like the *Tsiddūḳ ha-Dīn* overleaf, is centred on the page. Given the circumstances, the temptation is substantial to posit that the prayer commemorates Yūsuf Bey's death in September 1708, seven to eight months after the letter was composed. Yet on closer examination, this notion appears unlikely. By the time of his death, Yūsuf Bey would have been a Muslim for a number of decades. He would have had a Muslim funeral in Damietta, where he was buried. Even if we posit a Jewish friend or acquaintance who wished to say a private prayer in honour of his passing, that person would probably have recited the Mourner's Kaddish instead, and would probably not have written it down.

Another possibility is that the *Tsiddūḳ ha-Dīn* applies to the unknown recipient of the letter, who may have been a Jewish

official, perhaps even the Ottoman governor's *şarrāf*, or banker-cum-money lender. 'Alī Efendi's letter notes that Mu'allim Mūsā has appealed to the recipient in person to help him resolve the case, strengthening this impression. Perhaps this personage's death, even years after he received the letter, occasioned the Tsiddūḡ ha-Dīn. A rabbi or other community member officiating at his funeral may have written the prayer on the reverse of this letter, chosen at random from among his papers, in order to read it aloud at the burial, which quite possibly took place in the Basātīn Cemetery.

But perhaps the most likely possibility, prosaic as it may seem, is that the Tsiddūḡ ha-Dīn has nothing to do with 'Alī Efendi's letter. In other words, someone at some later date happened to use the reverse of the letter, presumably before it was buried in a paper grave, to write down the burial prayer, which had no connection to anyone named in the letter. Thus this may be one of the rare Ottoman-era Genizah documents in which the verso is unrelated to the recto.

2.0. Text

Paper, top cut away. 15.5 cm x 10.3 cm.

Recto: Tsiddūḡ ha-Dīn⁴⁰

- | | |
|---|---|
| [צדיק] אתה ה' וישר משפטיך צדיק ה' בכל דרכיו וחסיד בכל מעשיו | 1 |
| [צד]קתך צדק לע[ולם] ותורתך אמת משפטי ה' אמת צדקו יחדיו | 2 |

⁴⁰ My sincere thanks to Professor Dotan Arad for checking my transcription.

- 3 [ב] אשר דבר מלך שלטון ומי יאמר לו מה תעשה
- 4 והוא באחד ומי ישיבנו ונפשו אותה ויעש
- 5 קטון וגדול שם הוא ועבד חופשי מאדוניו
- 6 הן בעבדיו לא יאמין ובמלאכיו ישים תהלה
- 7 אף כי אנוש רימה ובן אדם תולעה ' ' מי גבר יחיא ולוא
- 8 יראה מות ימלט נפשו מיד שאול סלה ' ' י
- 9 אדם להבל דמה ימיו כצל עובר ' ' הצור תמים פעולו
- 10 כי כל דרכיו משפט אל אמונה ואין עול צדיק וישר הוא
- 11 דין ואמת שופט צדק באמת ברוך דין האמת כי כל משפטיו
- 12 צדק ואמת
- 13 בלע המות לנצח ומחה אדוני אלוהים //דמעה// מעל כל פנים וחרפת עמו
- 14 יסיר מעל כל הארץ כי ה" דבר ' ' יחיו מתך נבלתי יקומון הקיצו
- 15 ורננו שוכני עפר כי טל אורת טלך וארץ רפאים תפיל
- 16 והוא רחום יכפר עון
- 17 לא יבוא עוד שמשך וירחך לא יאסף כי ה" יאיא לך לאור עולם ושלמו ימי
- אבלך
- 18 ושלמו ושלמו

Upper Left Side, parallel to lines 3–5: 'Alī Efendi's seal

توكلي على الله في كل الامور

Verso⁴¹

[باسم الله الرحمن الرحيم]

- 1 بعد وان سالتهم عنا فاننا بخير وخاطرنا عندكم والذي نعرفكم به ان وصل الى عندنا
- 2 مكتوبكم صحبة المعلم موسى وعرفتونا من قضية الشبابك الذي له عند النصراني والناس وان النصراني
- 3 خدام عند الامير محمد اغا ملتزم بندر دمياط⁴² والواصل الى عندكم المعلم موسى والحال اناكم عند وصول
- 4 المكتوب اليكم تاخذوا مكتوب من حضرة كتخدال الوقت ومكتوب من الامير يوسف بيك ومكتوب
- 5 من الامير سليمان اودة باشه وعبد الله اودة باشه خطابا لنا ويذكر فيهم ان عند وصول المكاتيب
- 6 تنظروا حساب النصراني في منزلكم وترسلوهم الينا ومثل المكاتيب الذي لنا ايضا مكتوب

⁴¹ I should note that Yusuf Umrethwala has posted a transcription of the verso of this document in the Princeton Geniza Project database. However, I was unaware of his transcription until after I had completed my own transcription. See also Hathaway (2025, 429–30).

⁴² Here, the writer has apparently combined the ا and the ط into a sort of ligature, not unlike the ظ and the ا in مستاحفظان in his signature.

- 7 من الامير يوسف بيك ومكتوب من كتحدا الوقت ومكتوب من سليمان اودة
باشه وعبد الله اودة باشه
- 8 خطابا الى محمد اغا [ال] ملتزم حالا وتذكروا انهم يعملوا الحساب في بيت
الامير علي افندي وتدعوهم
- 9 يوكدوا في المكاتيب ويرسلوهم الينا على العجلة ونحن نخلصه من النصراني
ومن خلافه
- 10 على اخر حال واحمد افندي ومحمد افندي يسلم عليكم... في ذي القعدة
سنة ١١١٩ [١]

Signature

- 1 من الفقير
- 2 علي افندي
- 3 سردار
- 4 مستاحفظان
- 5 دمياط

3.0. Textual Notes

Recto⁴³

1. צדיק [אתה ה" וישר משפטך 'You are righteous, o Lord; your rulings are just': Ps. 119.137. Note that the scribe renders the abbreviation for the name of God, customarily ה"ה, as ה" with a superscript double *geresh*.
1. צדיק ה" בכל דרכיו וחסידי בכל מעשיו 'The Lord is beneficent in all his ways and faithful in all his works': Ps. 145.17.
2. צד[קתך צדק לע[ולם] ותורתך אמת 'Your righteousness is eternal; your teaching is true': Ps. 119.142.
2. משפטי ה" אמת צדקו יחדיו 'The judgements of the Lord are true, righteous altogether': The last two lines of Ps. 19.10.
3. [ב]אשר דבר מלך שלטון ומי יאמר לו מה תעשה 'inasmuch as a king's command is authoritative, and none can say to him, "What are you doing?"': Eccl. 8.4.
4. והוא באחד ומי ישיבנו ונפשו אותה ויעש 'He is one; who can dissuade him? Whatever he desires, he does': Job 23.13.
5. קטון וגדול שם הוא ועבד חופשי מאדוניו 'Small and great alike are there, and the slave is free of his master': Job 3.19.
6. הן בעבדיו לא יאמין ובמלאכיו ישים תהלה 'If he cannot trust his own servants and cast reproach on his angels': Job 4.18.

⁴³ English translations are from the JPS Hebrew–English Tana"kh.

7. אף כי אנוש רימה ובן אדם תולעה 'how much less man, a worm, the son of man, a maggot': Job 25.6, followed by two spaced gereshim that serve to demarcate interpolated text.
7. מי גבר יחיא ולוא 'what man can live and not [see death]: the first words of Ps. 89.49, which continues on the following line and ends with two more gereshim and the letter י. יחיא is probably a scribal error for יחיה ולא, 'can live and not [see]'.
9. אדם להבל דמה ימיו בצל עובר 'Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow': Ps. 144.4, followed by two spaced gereshim.
9. הצור תמים פעולו 'The Rock! His deeds are perfect': the first line of Deut. 32.4. פעולו is probably a scribal error for פעלו, 'his deeds'.
10. כי כל דרכיו משפט אל אמונה ואין עול צדיק וישר הוא 'Yea, all his ways are just. A faithful God, never false, true and upright is he': Lines 2–4 of Deut. 32.4. There is a small dot over the ך in דרכיו 'his ways' to indicate that it should be pronounced without a dagesh, i.e., like a kh.
11. דין ואמת שופט צדק באמת 'True judge, judging with righteousness and truth': Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer 14.8. באמת is probably a scribal error for ואמת 'and truth'.
11. ברוך דין האמת כי כל משפטיו 'Blessed be the true judge, for his judgements': The first six words of m. Berakhot 9.2.
12. צדק ואמת 'are righteous and true': The last two words of m. Berakhot 9.2.

13. בלע המות לנצח ומחה אדוני אלוהים //דמעה// מעל כל פנים וחרפת עמו
 'He will destroy death forever. My lord God will wipe the
 //tears// away from all faces and [will put an end to] the
 reproach of his people': The first 12 words of Isa. 25.8.
14. יסיר מעל כל הארץ כי ה" דבר 'will put an end to [the reproach
 of his people] over all the earth, for it is the Lord who has
 spoken': The last seven words of Isa. 25.8, followed by two
 spaced gereshim to indicate the end of the verse.
14. יחיו מתד נבלתי יקומון הקיצו 'Oh, let your dead revive! Let
 corpses arise! Awake': The first five words of Isa. 26.19. מתד
 is probably a scribal error for מתיך 'your dead'.
15. 'and shout for joy, you who dwell in the dust! For your dew is like the
 dew on fresh growth. You make the land of the shades come
 to life': The last 10 words of Isa. 26.19. There is a small dot
 over the ך in שוכני 'you who dwell' to indicate that it should
 be pronounced without a dagesh, i.e., like a kh.
16. 'But he, being merciful, forgave iniquity':
 The first four words of Ps. 78.38.
17. לא יבוא עוד שמשך וירחך לא יאסף כי ה" יאיא לך לאור עולם ושלמו ימי
 אבליך 'Your sun shall set no more, your moon no more
 withdraw; for the Lord shall be a light to you forever, and
 your days of mourning shall be ended': Isa. 60.20. יאיא
 'shall be' is probably a scribal error for יהיה.

Verso

4. كَتخداِ الوقت *'Kethüüdā-yı al-waqt'*: It appears that the scribe has written the standard symbol for a Persian *idāfa* between the words كَتخداِ and الوقت, even though the second term of a Persian *idāfa* does not take a definite article. The result is *kethüüdā-yı al-waqt*, an erroneous hybrid of a Persian and an Arabic *idāfa*. On the other hand, it is not dissimilar to *bende-i el-fakīr* in the signatures of T-S AS 178.88 (Ch. 2, Doc. 3) and Mosseri Xa.3.10 (Ch. 2, Doc. 4).

Signature

4. مستاحفظان *'Mustāḥfiẓān'* (localised Janissaries) is here rendered with an additional *ālif*. The conventional spelling is مستحفظان.

4.0. Translation

Recto: Tsiddūḳ ha-Dīn⁴⁴

1. You are righteous, o Lord; your rulings are just. The Lord is beneficent in all his ways and faithful in all his works.
2. Your righteousness is eternal; your teaching is true. The judgements of the Lord are true, righteous altogether,
3. inasmuch as a king's command is authoritative, and none can say to him, 'What are you doing?'

⁴⁴ English translations are from the JPS Hebrew–English Tana"kh.

4. He is one; who can dissuade him? Whatever he desires, he does.
5. Small and great alike are there, and the slave is free of his master.
6. If he cannot trust his own servants and cast reproach on his angels,
7. how much less man, a worm, the son of man, a maggot. What man can live and not
8. see death, can save himself from the clutches of Sheol? Selah.
9. Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow. The Rock! His deeds are perfect.
10. Yea, all his ways are just. A faithful God, never false, true and upright is he.
11. True judge, judging with righteousness and truth. Blessed be the true judge, for his judgements
12. are righteous and true.
13. He will destroy death forever. My lord God will wipe the //tears// away from all faces and will put an end to the reproach of his people
14. over all the earth, for it is the Lord who has spoken. Oh, let your dead revive! Let corpses arise! Awake
15. and shout for joy, you who dwell in the dust! For your dew is like the dew on fresh growth. You make the land of the shades come to life.

16. But he, being merciful, forgave iniquity.
17. Your sun shall set no more, your moon no more withdraw;
for the Lord shall be a light to you forever, and your days
of mourning shall be ended.
18. shall be ended shall be ended

Upper Left Side, parallel to lines 3–5: ‘Alī Efendi’s seal

Trust in God in all matters.

Verso

[In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate.]

1. Now then: If you were to ask about us, we are well. Our
thoughts are with you. What we inform you of is that your
letter has arrived
2. with Mu‘allim Mūsā, and you have informed us about the
matter of the nets owed to him by the Christian and the
[other] people, and that the Christian
3. is a servant of Meḥmed Agha, the tax farmer of the port of
Damietta. Mu‘allim Mūsā is coming [back] to you, and
now, as for you, when [this] letter reaches you,
4. obtain a letter from his excellency the Kethüdā al-Waqt and
a letter from the *amīr* Yūsuf Bey and a letter
5. from the *amīr* Süleymān Odabaşı and ‘Abdullāh Odabaşı,
addressed to us, stating in them, ‘When the letters arrive,

6. look into the Christian's account in your residence and send them [the accounts?] to us'. In addition to the letters to us, [there should be] a letter
7. from the *amīr* Yūsuf Bey and a letter from the Kethüdā al-Waqt and a letter from Süleyman Odabaşı and Abdullah Odabaşı
8. addressed to Meḥmed Agha, [the] current tax farmer, telling them⁴⁵ to draw up the account in the house of the *amīr* 'Alī Efendi [the writer of the present letter]. Urge them
9. to be emphatic in the letters and send them to us speedily, and we will free him [i.e., Mu'allim Mūsā] from the Christian and the others
10. entirely. Aḥmed Efendi and Meḥmed Efendi greet you ... in Dhī'l-Qa'da of the year [1]119 [late January–early February 1708].

Signature

1. From the poor one
2. 'Alī Efendi,
3. commander
4. of the Janissaries (Mustaḥfiẓān)
5. of Damietta

⁴⁵ Presumably Meḥmed Agha's functionaries are meant.

Plate V: CAJS Halper 222, recto. University of Pennsylvania Libraries. Public domain.
<https://openn.library.upenn.edu/Data/0002/html/h222.html>.

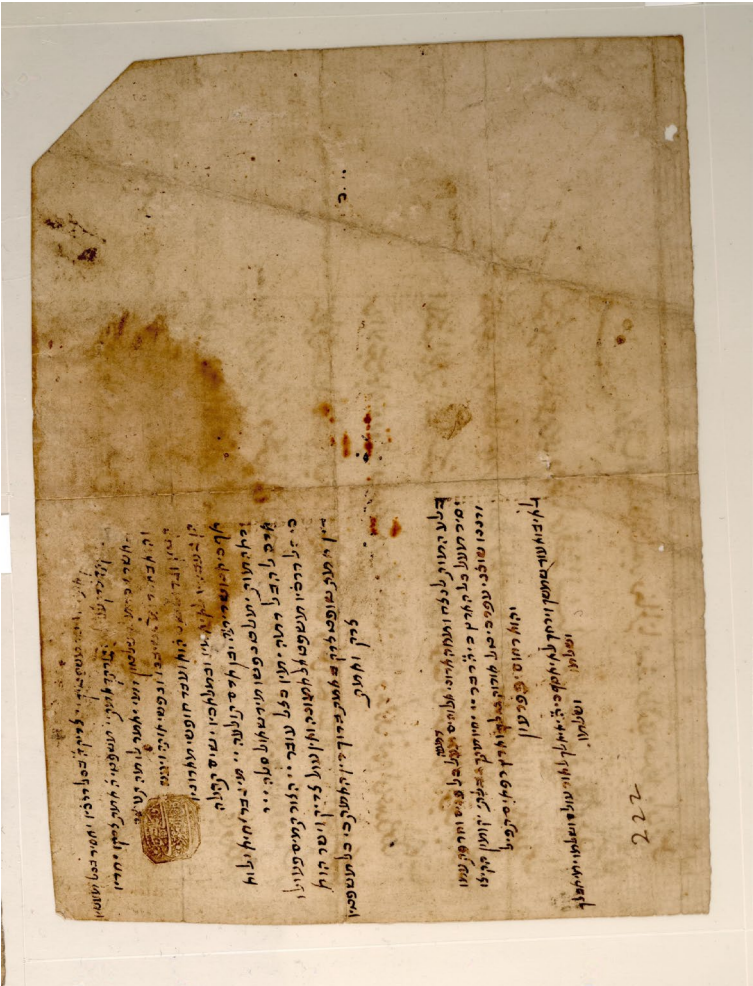


Plate VI: CAJS Halper 222, verso. University of Pennsylvania Libraries.
Public domain. <https://openn.library.upenn.edu/Data/0002/html/h222.html>.



2. DOCUMENTS FROM OTTOMAN ALEXANDRIA

In contrast to Damietta, Alexandria had remained an active port on the shores of the Mediterranean since its founding by Alexander the Great in 331 BCE. It operated in tandem with nearby Rosetta (Rashīd in Arabic), on which Alexandria's merchants and naval captains relied for access to the Nile. Under Ottoman rule, Alexandria handled commerce throughout the Mediterranean, but with Istanbul and the Anatolian ports, including Izmir, above all (Panzac 2004, 187–88). Hence the tax farm of its customs was a lucrative proposition that conferred considerable influence on its holder. Three of the five documents presented in this chapter focus on the powerful customs director Salmūn al-Iskandarānī, who appears to have held the office in the early seventeenth century, though the exact dates of his tenure are unknown. The fourth, a petition from a Jewish merchant who appears to have succeeded Salmūn in a regional tax farm, documents the widespread, if legally suspect, practice of 'sub-leasing' subordinate parts of a tax farm.

Unlike both Damietta and its own sister port, Rosetta, Alexandria had no direct access to the Nile. The city relied on wells for its fresh water supply, and these in turn were maintained and operated by the administrator (*kāshif*) of Buḥayra sub-province, who was based in the countryside to Alexandria's south. Perhaps because of the vital role that he played, this *kāshif*, and possibly

the *kāshifs* of neighbouring sub-provinces, felt entitled to confiscate crops and livestock earmarked for the *māl-i mīrī*, the tribute that the director of Alexandria's customs, like his counterpart in Damietta, laboured to assemble every year. Document 3 reflects Salmūn's exasperation at this interference in one of his most important duties.

In the early nineteenth century, the autonomous governor Meḥmed 'Alī Pasha (r. 1220–64 AH/1805–48 CE) chose Alexandria as a focus of his attempts to manufacture silk cloth domestically, part of a series of short-lived industrialisation schemes. The city's role in the export trade to Europe may have influenced the pasha's decision. The final document, dated 1239 AH/1824 CE, is a receipt for a salary payment from the director of the city's silk looms to the doorkeeper of a silk factory.

Map 5. Alexandria in the Ottoman era (Ashraf Ali and Abouelfadl 2022, 12900, modified)



**DOCUMENTS 1-3: T-S AR. 38.111,
T-S AR. 39.425, T-S AS 178.88**

**THREE DOCUMENTS RELATING TO
ALEXANDRIA CUSTOMS DIRECTOR
SALMŪN AL-ISKANDARĀNĪ,
EARLY 17TH CENTURY**

1.0. Discussion

These three documents, all undated and all in Ottoman Turkish, concern Salmūn al-Iskandarānī, the Jewish director of Alexandria's customs. All three depict Salmūn as an immensely influential personage with connections to the Ottoman palace and to other powerful officials in Egypt. Particularly noteworthy are his ties to military figures. These documents—two letters to Salmūn and a petition from him to an unnamed official—date from the late sixteenth or the early seventeenth century, based on the handwriting and the appearance of the paper; internal and circumstantial evidence, discussed below, tends to confirm this impression. In addition, however, the letter-writer's seal on the second document appears to include the *hijrī* date 1030, i.e., 1621 CE. If this is an accurate reading, then Salmūn was active after the tax farms of Egypt's Mediterranean port customs had been

added to the revenues of Egypt's Ottoman governor, who appointed *dhimmī* merchants to administer them.¹

Prior to this early seventeenth-century development, as noted in the introduction to Chapter 1, *dhimmī* merchants had held the tax farms of Egypt's Mediterranean port customs in their own right. The growing authority of the port customs director during the first century of Ottoman rule over Egypt coincided with Ottoman efforts to foster trade through the Mediterranean ports and the not unrelated growth of Alexandria's population (Raymond 1980a, 92–97, 99–101). As a result of these developments, the physical location of the customs depot, as well as the local *sharī'a* court, the main bazaar, and the *funduqs*, or hostels, of the major European trading powers, moved north over the course of this period, from the old walled city to the isthmus between the city's eastern and western harbours.²

As to Salmūn al-Iskandarānī specifically, a document from Cairo's Karaite synagogue, studied by Donald Richards, identifies a Salmūn ibn Ibrāhīm al-Iskandarānī as 'a rabbi in the Jewish quarter [of Cairo] and spokesman for the population of Arabised Egyptian Jews' (*al-ḥakhām huwa bi-ḥārat al-Yahūd wa'l-mu-takallim 'ala ṭā'ifat al-Yahūd al-M[iṣriyyīn] al-musta'ribīn*) in 1572 (Richards 1972, 144). (Richards' transcription has *al-mustaghribīn*, but this is surely a misreading.)³ This Salmūn was apparently not

¹ Evliyā (*Seyāhatnāme*, 358, 372, 386); Shaw (1962, 103); see also the introduction to Chapter 1.

² Tuchscherer (2009, 57, 60–62, 64, 73–74; 2013, 117); Bacqué-Grammont (2013, 34 n. 4); Ashraf Ali and Abouelfadl (2022, 12899–900).

³ My thanks to Dotan Arad for pointing this out.

a Karaite himself; rather, the adjective *musta'ribīn* implies that he belonged to Egypt's sizeable community of 'native' Arabophone (Rabbanite) Jews. Our Salmūn al-Iskandarānī could conceivably be the same person named in the Karaite document. However, this identification seems somewhat questionable: Salmūn of the Karaite document appears to be a fixture in Cairo rather than in Alexandria, and in addition, the 1030 *hijrī* date associated with one of the letters to the Alexandrian Salmūn indicates that he was active several decades later than the Cairene Salmūn. A more plausible identification is with the Musta'rib sage Solomon Halevi Skandari, who was active in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.⁴ It is also conceivable that all three Salmūns are the same person.

1.1. T-S Ar. 38.111

T-S Ar. 38.111 and T-S Ar. 39.425 are both letters to Salmūn from military officers who seem to regard him as their superior. Both open with the affectionate *benīm rūḥum* (literally, 'my soul' or 'my spirit'), although the formalities that follow imply that both officers are reporting to Salmūn. The power hierarchy is more obvious in 38.111, a surprisingly emotive letter from Salmūn's agent (Ottoman Turkish, *vekīl*) Süleymān Bostāncı. Ordinarily, this sobriquet would indicate a member of the corps of 'Gardeners' (Bostāncılar) at the imperial palace in Istanbul—or, particularly

⁴ He is mentioned in ENA NS 31.26, a letter in Hebrew to him from his father, and T-S NS 172.20, a letter in Judeo-Arabic to him from one David Benjamin. My thanks to Dotan Arad for alerting me to this figure and these documents.

during the second half of the seventeenth century, in Edirne—who had the duty of rowing the sultan’s barge, as well as guarding the palace and the city at large, along with other corps of palace soldiery (Uzunçarşılı 1945b, 465–87). To judge from his seal, which identifies him as ‘ibn ‘Abdullāh’, a patronymic that typically designates a convert to Islam, Süleymān was also a *devshirme* recruit. How someone in this position came to be the agent of Alexandria’s customs director is unclear, but the circumstance attests to Salmūn’s connections in the imperial palace, particularly since Süleymān emphasises that the two men have been friends for many years. He seems to feel that he has earned Salmūn’s trust, based on their lengthy friendship and the fact that he had apparently saved Salmūn from the wrath of one Meḥmed Agha, obviously a powerful military officer, after Salmūn failed to remit to Meḥmed the profits from a sale of wood.

The main text of TS 38.111 demonstrates that other high-ranking military officers (*aghas*) looked to Salmūn to pay their salaries, or at least to augment them, when Egypt’s governor would or could not. Being able to fulfil such a role would make Salmūn a supremely powerful figure, comparable to financiers, including other customs directors, in other parts of the seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire (Whitehead 2023b, 122–36; 2023a). Like these other financiers, he also seems to have played a role in the supply of critical provisions to Egypt, most notably, at least so far as our first document is concerned, wood. In the main text of his letter, Süleymān notes that he, presumably on Salmūn’s behalf, provided unspecified ‘men of state’ with wood. His marginal emendations, in addition to mentioning Salmūn’s

sale of wood on behalf of Meḥmed Agha, question Salmūn about sales to the son of ‘Āmir Abū ‘Alī and to the son of ‘Immiyā ‘Alī, who may be the same person. Since Egypt was deficient in wood, supplies routinely reached the province by ship from Anatolia, and this sort of shipment may have been key to Süleymān Bos-tāncı’s work for Salmūn.

Over and above these details about provisions and salaries, however, this letter reveals the scope of Salmūn’s influence. The writer is his agent, a member of the palace soldiery who represents him in commercial transactions all over Egypt and perhaps even at the sultan’s court.⁵ At the same time, Salmūn has multiple other clients (singular, *tābi*‘; see Hathaway 1997b, 21–24), both Jewish and, possibly, otherwise, whom he has surely helped to attain the status of *mu‘allim*, the omnibus title that connoted an international merchant, banker, or fiscal advisor. The potential for tension between *vekīl* and *tābi*‘ comes through in Süleymān’s complaint that Salmūn’s client Mu‘allim Ishāq has accused him of defaming Salmūn in front of members of the Ottoman government, whether imperial or provincial. Directing the customs at such a key port enabled Salmūn to establish a patronage network that could represent his interests all over the empire. In Alexandria itself, meanwhile, he was a major power.

1.2. T-S Ar. 39.425

This last point is reflected in T-S Ar. 39.425, a straightforward letter of introduction from one Pervīz Agha, whose seal, on the

⁵ Hathaway (1997b, 143–47; 2018a, 170–73, 178–79, 184–87, 192, 212).

document's verso, appears to bear the date 1030, implying that the letter was composed in or shortly after 1621 CE. Pervîz asks Salmûn to look out for the interests of the bearer, the divisional commander (*ser bölük*, or *bölükbaşı*) Manşûr, who is on his way to 'the noble Ka'ba', probably meaning that he is undertaking the *ʿumra*, the pilgrimage that can be performed at any time of year. If he were travelling to Mecca on the *hajj*, he would certainly have joined one of the massive pilgrim caravans that formed every year in Damascus and Cairo. Pilgrims and soldiers, as well as those who were both, were allowed to transport goods for their personal use through Egypt's ports without paying duty. Many, however, carried goods to trade (Shaw 1962, 105), and one aim of Pervîz's letter may have been to persuade Salmûn to allow Manşûr to pass through duty-free. Pervîz himself is clearly a high regimental officer, and if he is sending someone to Alexandria en route to Mecca, he himself must be located north or west of Alexandria, possibly even in the imperial capital. The tone of his appeal to Salmûn makes it clear that for anyone passing through Alexandria, the customs director was an invaluable contact.

Perhaps the most noteworthy feature of this letter is its emphasis on hometown ties: Pervîz insists that Salmûn must help Manşûr because they both come from Alexandria. Manşûr is not a common name among military personnel from the Ottoman central lands, and if this Manşûr is a native Arabic-speaker from Alexandria, then he represents an exceedingly rare instance of an Arab joining the Ottoman military and rising to mid-level officer rank. Quite apart from considerations of ethno-linguistic identity, this letter demonstrates that place of origin was a natural source

of patron-client ties, potentially as important as shared commercial or political interests.

1.3. T-S AS 178.88

Finally, T-S AS 178.88 gives voice to Salmūn himself, who petitions a high official, possibly the governor of Egypt, to take action against rapacious ‘*kāshifs*’ men’ who steal the sheep and other provisions that form part of the *māl-i mīrī*, the money and provisions that Egypt delivered to the imperial palace every year. These provisions were shipped to Istanbul from Alexandria and Damietta, and this petition underlines the customs director’s role in assembling and dispatching them. Naturally the director of the port customs would be preoccupied with protecting state property from theft and damage before it shipped out. However, this petition deals specifically with a tax farm, or *muqāṭa‘a*, that Salmūn controls: that of Ḥaḏra, possibly al-Khaḏra (‘green’ in Arabic), a village southeast of Alexandria in Buḥayra sub-province. This village and its surroundings apparently produced sheep and crops that formed part of the *māl-i mīrī* (cf. Doc. 4, below).⁶

Kāshif, literally ‘inspector’, was the administrator of one of Egypt’s sub-provinces, responsible above all for the maintenance of irrigation works. The post had originated under the Mamluk Sultanate, and the Ottomans had retained it, although in the early

⁶ See also Shtober (1989, 71), which locates al-Khaḏra near Rosetta, doubtless referring to Jazīrat al-Khaḏra, north of Rosetta on the Mediterranean coast. This seems a less likely identification given the context of our document. There is also a Jazīrat al-Khaḏra in Gharbiyya sub-province; see Toussoun (1936, 466).

centuries of Ottoman rule, the ranks of *kāshifs* were often filled with military officers from the imperial palace or the Balkans (Hathaway 2009, 97; Michel 2019, 267–77). The *kāshif* of Buḥayra sub-province, immediately south of Alexandria, was responsible for the port city's fresh water supply: once a year, he entered the city with 300 oxen, which over the course of a month, usually coinciding with September, turned the water wheels that filled the city's 130 cisterns with water from the Naṣiriyya Canal, which formed Alexandria's sole link to the Nile (Evliyā, *Seyāḥatnāme*, 363; Tuchscherer 2013, 110–11).⁷ The followers of this *kāshif* and other Nile Delta *kāshifs* are surely the '*kāshifs*' men' against whom Salmūn rails. In fact, this annual ritual may have given the Buḥayra *kāshif*'s men the perfect opportunity to pilfer and damage the provisions intended for the palace.

2.0. Text of T-S Ar. 38.111

Paper, top right corner torn away. 30.20 cm x 20.70 cm.

Recto

1. Cenāb-i 'izzet me'āb-ı sa'ādet-niṣāb, bender-i İskenderiyye mültezimi Mu'allim Salmūn ḥazretleri-yi kāmyāb:
2. Ba'de's-selām ma'a'l-'izz ve'l-ikrām, i'lām ve inhā' olunan budur ki: Ḥālā cānib-i aḥvālimizden su'āl idersenüz,

⁷ Tuchscherer uses a different edition of the *Seyāḥatnāme* that features slight variations in the text.

3. el-ḥamdü li-llāh te‘ālā ve’l-minne şihhatda olub ve sālīmīn ve ḡānīmīn bender-i Reşīd’e gelüb, dāḡil olduk şöyle ma‘lūmunuz ola. Ve ḡālā
4. bu muḡibbiniz Mısır’da iken tābī’niz Mu‘allim İshāk geldi ve bize didi ki sizden ötürī biz devletliler ḡuzūrlarında sizin
5. ḡaḡkınıza kem cevāblar söyliyormuşuz. Hīḡ olur mı ben senün ḡaḡkına kem cevāblar söyleyim? Benim daḡa dört-beş kīselik
6. aḡşābım aldılar, biz ise daḡa ziyāde söyledük, eksik söylemedik. Hīḡ olur mı ben senün ḡaḡkına kem cevāblar söyleyim?
7. ḡuşūşan biz sizin ile niḡe ḡaḡḡ-ı ḡuḡūḡumuz vardır. Ve ḡadīmīden dostumuzsuz Allāh’a ma‘lūmdur. ḡaḡḡı devletlinin
8. ḡuzūrunda [sic] varsam, sizin eylūḡünüz söylerim. Ve benim rūḡum Sinān Aḡa sāḡib-i devlet ḡazretlerine biz Mısır’da iken
9. bir mīḡdār ḡül gönderdiler ve Ḳāsım Aḡa’ya bir mīḡdār şem‘-i ‘asel gönderdiler ve ma‘an bir mektūb gönderdiler. ‘Ulūfesinin
10. azlıḡından ve maşrūfun ḡokluḡundan, ‘İsā Aḡa ise Sinān Aḡa’nun mektūbunı şāḡib-i devlet ḡazretlerine virmediler, didiler ki
11. ‘Biz kendümüz Mu‘allim Salmūn’a mektūb gönderelim, ‘ulūfesi üzerine günde onar pāra ziyāde virsünler’ deyü size mektūb yazdılar.
12. Siz daḡı ‘İsā Aḡa’nun mektūbuna muḡālefet itmeyesiz, bir yerden onar pāra ta‘yīn idesiz.

Signature (far left side)

1. El-fakîr
2. muḥibb-i muḥliş [?]
3. Süleymân
4. Bostāncı

Right Margin, Upside-Down

1. Ve sâbıkâ size virdiğimiz kırk şerîfiyi
2. göndersenüz ?? [illegible word crossed out] gerek idi. Dağa göndermedinüz.
3. Luṭf idüb, bizim kırk şerîfiyi göndüresiz.
4. Ve ‘Âmir Ebû ‘Alî oğluna aḥşâbı virelim mi?
5. Ne mîḳdâr aḥşâb virelim, ana göre bize
6. bildüresiz, yoksa istediği aḥşâbı
7. virelim mi? Muḥaṣṣalü’l-keḷâm bize mufaṣṣal
8. mektûb gönderesiz, ana göre ‘Âmir’e aḥşâbı
9. virelim. Ve Mu‘allim Şems’e [?] ve cemî‘ etbâ’nıza
10. selâmlar ve du‘âlar ideriz, ḳabûl buyurıla.
11. Ve ‘Îsâ Ağa’nun mektûbı ma‘an irsâl
12. olunmuşdur şöyle ma‘lûmunuz ola. Ve benim rûḥum

Top Left, Diagonal

1. Ve benim rûḥum Mu‘allim Salmûn, ma‘lûmunuzdur ki geçende bize mektûb gönderdünüz ve ki

2. ‘Immiyā ‘Alī oğluna bir miqdār kereste viresiz’ diyüb, i‘lām eylemişsiz.
3. Hālā cezāre-i ‘Immiyā ‘Alī oğlundadır. Sizün mektübunuz mücebince keresteleri vire-
4. lü mi, vormeyelü mü bize bir şāfī cevāb gönderesiz. Ve Meḥmed Ağa’ya daḥi
5. mektüb gönderdük. Bir miqdār kereste içün sevvīdan [?]
6. o temlik kerestelerinden siz daḥi mu‘āvenet idesiz ve sizde
7. olan kırk şerīfiyi Meḥmed Ağa’ya viresiz. Sāḳiyelerin [?]
8. mi memātından sizi ḥalāş eyledik.
9. Siz daḥi bu ḥuşūşda mu‘āvenet
10. idesiz.

Verso

Top Right: Address

Hālā bender-i İskenderiyye mültezimi olan Mu‘allim Salmūn’a vāşıl ola [].

Bottom Right: Süleymān Bostāncı’s seal, upside-down

1. ...ilā Allāh
2. el-faḳīr
3. Süleymān ibn ‘Abdullāh

3.0. Textual Notes to T-S Ar. 38.111

Recto

1. *Cenāb* lit., ‘side’: For the use of *cenāb* (جناب) as an honorific for an eminent figure, see Liebreuz (2022, Letters 2–192 *passim*); and Textual Notes to Ch. 3, Docs 1, 5, and 6.
8. *ḥużūrunda* ‘in [his] presence’: This should properly be *ḥużūruna* ‘into [his] presence’.
8. *eylüğünüz* ‘your goodness’: This is an obsolete form of *iyiliğiniz*.
- 8, 10. *ṣāhib-i devlet* lit., ‘possessor of fortune’: This is an honorific customarily applied to the grand vizier or the governor of a province. Here, the governor of Egypt is intended.
9. *Gül* (كول) ‘rose’ is an alternative spelling for كل.

Right Margin, Upside-Down

- 1,3. *Şerīfī* (*sharīfī*) was the gold coin minted in all Ottoman Arab provinces, as well as southeastern Anatolia, as a provincial equivalent of the imperial gold *sulṭānī*.⁸

Top Left, Diagonal

2. *‘Immiyā* ‘Alī, personal name: The *laqab* is written عميا ‘blindness’. It is possible that the person referenced is the same individual as ‘Āmir Abū ‘Alī, mentioned earlier in the letter,

⁸ Raymond (1973–74, I:28); Pamuk (1994, II:954–55; 2000, 99); discussion of Ch. 5, Doc. 1.

and that in that case, his name is mis-rendered in one or the other section, but this may also be a different person.

3. *cezîre-i İmmiyā* ‘*Alī oğlundadır* lit., ‘in the island of ‘Immiyā ‘Alī’s son’: There are a number of villages in the Nile Delta with the prefix *Jazīra*, ‘island’, whether or not they actually occupy islands in the Nile or elsewhere.⁹
7. *Sāḳiyelerin*: This could be a plural possessive form of *sāḳī* (ساقی), a mystical reference to God.

4.0. Translation of T-S Ar. 38.111

Recto

1. To the noble and felicitous tax-farmer of the port of Alexandria, his excellency Mu‘allim Salmūn:
2. After greetings with glory and honour, the announcement and communication are as follows: if you ask about how we are doing,
3. know that thanks to God the exalted and his goodness, we are well and have come safe and sound to the port of Rosetta and entered it. And now,
4. while this affectionate friend of yours [i.e., the writer] was in Cairo, your client Mu‘allim Ishāq arrived and accused us

⁹ See Toussoun (1928, 271, 394, 402, 410; 1936, 434, 441, 466, 479, 487, 496, 506).

5. of speaking ill of you in the presence of men of state. Could it ever happen that I would speak ill of you? They also took four or five purses' worth
6. of my wood; as for us, we said more, not less. Could it ever happen that I would speak ill of you?
7. In particular, consider how deep a friendship we have with you. God knows that you have been our friend for a very long time. Whatever man of state's
8. presence I enter, I will speak of your goodness. Furthermore, my dear, while we were in Cairo, Sinān Agha sent his excellency the possessor of fortune [i.e., the Ottoman governor of Egypt]
9. a bunch of roses, and he sent Kāsim Agha a bunch of beeswax candles, and with them he sent a letter. Because his salary
10. is too little and his expenses too great, 'Īsā Agha did not give Sinān Agha's letter to his excellency the governor but
11. [instead] they wrote you a letter, saying 'Let's write a letter to Mu'allim Salmūn ourselves, asking him to increase his [i.e., 'Īsā Agha's] salary by ten *pāras* a day'.
12. As for you, don't oppose 'Īsā Agha's letter. Allocate the ten *pāras* from somewhere.

Signature (far left side)

1. The poor one,
2. The sincere friend [?],

3. Süleymān

4. Bostāncı

Right Margin, Upside-Down

1. And you were supposed to send [illegible word crossed out] the forty [gold] *sherifis* that we had given you previously.
2. You still haven't sent them,
3. [so] please send our forty *sherifis*.
4. And shall we give the wood to the son of 'Āmir Abū 'Alī?
5. What amount shall we give [him]?
6. Tell us accordingly; otherwise shall we give him any [amount of] wood he wants?
7. In short, send us a detailed letter,
8. and we shall give 'Āmir the wood accordingly.
9. We send greetings and prayers to Mu'allim Şems [?] and all your clients,
10. may they [the prayers] be accepted.
11. Be aware that [this] was sent with 'Īsā Agha's letter.
12. And my dear

Top Left, Diagonal

1. And my dear Mu'allim Salmūn, you know that in the past, you sent us a letter and that
2. you told us, 'Give the son of 'Immiyā 'Alī a quantity of wood'.

3. It is still in the village/holding of ‘Immiyā ‘Alī’s son. In accordance with your letter,
4. do we give the wood to him, or do we not give it to him? Send us a clear answer. We also sent a letter to Meḥmed Agha.
5. For a quantity of wood, equally [?],
6. you should also provide assistance with wood from that property,
7. and you should give Meḥmed Agha the forty *sherīfs* that you have.
8. We have saved you from death.
9. In this matter
10. you should also provide assistance.

Verso

Top Right: Address

May [this letter] reach Mu‘allim Salmūn, currently the tax farmer of the port of Alexandria []

Bottom Right: Süleymān Bostāncı’s seal, upside-down

1. ... to God
2. the poor one,
3. Süleymān ibn ‘Abdullāh

5.0. Text of T-S Ar. 39.425

Paper. 20.50 cm x 14.50 cm.

Recto

1. Benim rūḥum Mu'allim Salmūn,
2. Ba'de's-selām bi'l-'izz ve'l-ikrām, inhā' ve i'lām olunan budur ki:
3. Benim rūḥum, işbu ḥāmil-i varaḳa Manşūr ser bölük ol cānibe revāne olunmuştur.
4. Ve mezkūrun yedinde ba'zı tezākır vardır. Ve Ka'be-i şerīfe teveccüh itmekdir
5. murādı. Vuşul bulduḳda, luṭf [ü] mürüvvet idüb, müsā'ade idesiz zīrā
6. ḳadīmī beledinizdir, ve size i'timād idüb, ol cānibe teveccüh eylemiştir.
7. Kerem idüb, mezbūrı 'avḳ itdirmeyüb, himmetiniz dirig itmeyesiz
8. zīrā i'timādı size ke-velidir [?], bağ-ı ḳadimin lāzımdır ki ma'lūm olmaya.

Signature

1. El-faḳīr
2. Perviz
3. Ağa

Right Margin, Upside-Down

1. Ve yeni senenüz mübârek olsun.
2. Hakkâ ma'lûmdur ki bir mertebe şafâ
3. eyledük [ki] ta'bîre kâbil degil,
4. Hakk-ı Te'âlâ mübârek eyleye.

Verso: Pervîz Agha's seal

1. Mazhar-ı
2. lutf-i ilâhî
3. Pervîz

[Above the word *lutf*, there appears to be a date, ١٠٣٠./1030, equivalent to 1621 CE.]

6.0. Textual Note to T-S Ar. 39.425

Recto

3. *bölük*: A *bölük* was the largest subdivision of a regiment of Ottoman soldiery.

7.0. Translation of T-S Ar. 39.425

Recto

1. My dear Mu'allim Salmûn,
2. Following greetings with nobility and honour, the communication and announcement are as follows:

3. My dear, the bearer of this letter, Maṣṣūr the divisional commander, has travelled to that region.
4. The aforementioned [bearer] has several documents in hand and intends to proceed to the noble Kaʿba.
5. When he arrives, demonstrate your generosity and favour him because
6. he has long been your fellow townsman. He has proceeded to that region relying on you.
7. Be noble, and do not hinder or refuse the aforementioned [bearer] your support
8. because he trusts you like a patron [?]. Your old bond must not be forgotten.

Signature

1. The poor one
2. Perviz
3. Agha

Right Margin, Upside-Down

1. May you have a blessed new year.
2. God knows that we have been enjoying ourselves
3. so much that it can't be put into words.
4. May God the exalted bless [the new year].

Verso: Perviz Agha's seal

1. The one honoured by
2. divine favour,
3. Perviz

8.0. Text of T-S AS 178.88

Paper, large tear at upper right. Measurements unavailable.

Recto

[The top right corner of the recto is torn away, obscuring the first several words of the first two lines.]

1. [] [hazretler]inin hâk-ı pây-ı şeriflerine 'arz-ı hâlîm budur
ki: Hâzra muḳāṭa'asına
2. []'e müte'allıḳ māl gelür yerler vardır, cümleden ba'zı
kāşif ādamları
3. ve ḡayrî kimesneler bu cānibe gelüb, ve mîriye 'ā'id olur
koyun ve ḡayrî nesne götürüb, ve kendüleri
4. götürdüklerinden mā'adā, fellāḫların koyunları ve
metā'ların bile 'bizümdür' deyü bu ṭarîḳ üzere
5. māl-i mîriyi kaçurub, mücib ṭaleb olundukda üzerimize
kimi ṭopuz ve kimi kılıç çeküb,
6. māl-i mîriye ḡasāret iderler. Sulṭānımdan ricā olunur ki bu
māl-i mîriye bunlardan bir ferd
7. māni' olub, üzerimize kılıç ve ṭopuz çekmeyeler, 'ā'id olan
mālimiz alalım māni' olmayalar

8. deyü mü'ekked buyuruldı-yı şerīf ricā olunur ki māl-i mīrīdir taḥsīl olub, ḥasāret
9. vāḳi' olmaya ve anun ki üzerinde māl-i mīrī ola, her kim olursa, dīne müḥālefet
10. eylemeye. Bākī fermān sulṭānımındır.

Signature (bottom left)

1. Bende-i
2. el-faḳīr
3. Salmūn
4. İskenderānī,
5. 'āmil-i Ḥaḏra

Bottom Left, Diagonal (the requested order in response)

1. Mīrī'ye 'ā'id olan resm için māni' olmayalar
2. deyü buyuruldı.

Verso, Top Right: Judeo–Arabic filing note¹⁰

אן לא	1
ידכל פי	2
מאל סלטאן	3
במעאכסה	4

¹⁰ My thanks to Alan Elbaum and Amir Ashur for their help in deciphering this filing note.

9.0. Textual Note to T-S AS 178.88

Recto

1. *Ḥaḡra*, place name: This may be الخضرة ('green' in Arabic), a region southeast of Alexandria, near the border of Buḡayra sub-province.

10.0. Translation of T-S AS 178.88

Recto

[The top right corner of the recto is torn away, obscuring the first several words of the first two lines.]

1. My petition to the noble dust under the feet of his excellency is as follows:
2. There are places that produce income for al-Khaḍra *muqāṭa'a*. Various *kāshifs*' men and other people come from everywhere
3. to this region and take the sheep and other objects that belong to the state,
4. and in addition to taking them, they even say of the peasants' sheep and possessions, 'They are ours', and in this way
5. they make off with the *māl-i mīrī*. When we ask them why they are doing this, some pull out a mace, some a sword,
6. and cause harm to the *māl-i mīrī*. From my lord is requested a definitive noble decree, confirming that no one from among these [people] may obstruct the *māl-i mīrī*,

7. that they may not pull a sword or mace on us, and that they must not prevent us from taking the property that belongs to us,
8. [so] that the *māl-i mīrī* is collected and not harmed,
9. and that no one who has *māl-i mīrī* in his possession, whoever he may be, shall contravene the [sacred] law.
10. The eternal command is my lord's.

Signature (bottom left)

1. The slave,
2. the poor one,
3. Salmūn
4. the Alexandrian,
5. tax farmer of al-Khaḍra

Top Left, Diagonal (the requested order in response)

An order has been issued stating that they may not hinder tax collection for the state.

Verso, Top Right (Judeo-Arabic filing note)

1. Not to
2. interfere in
3. the state's property
4. through harassment

Plate VII: T-S Ar. 38.111, recto. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

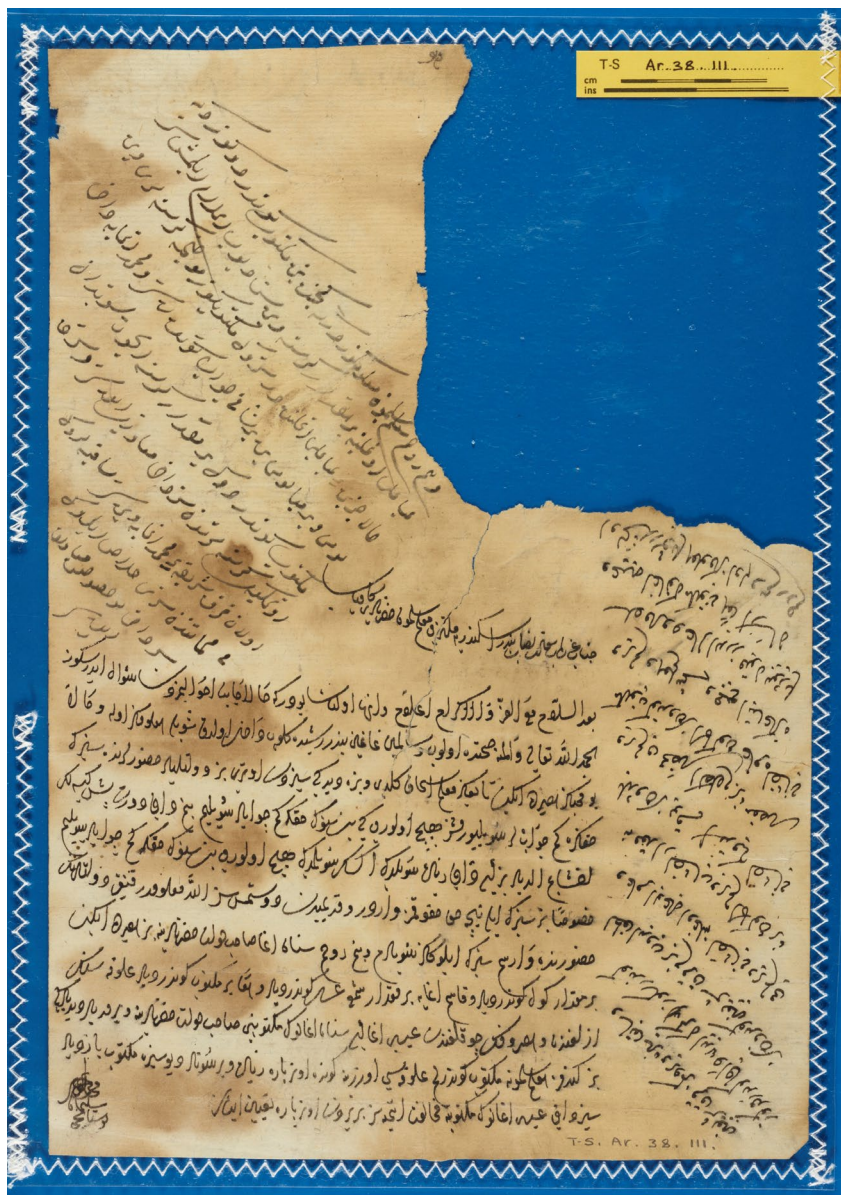


Plate VIII: T-S Ar. 38.111, verso. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Plate X: T-S Ar. 39.425, verso. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

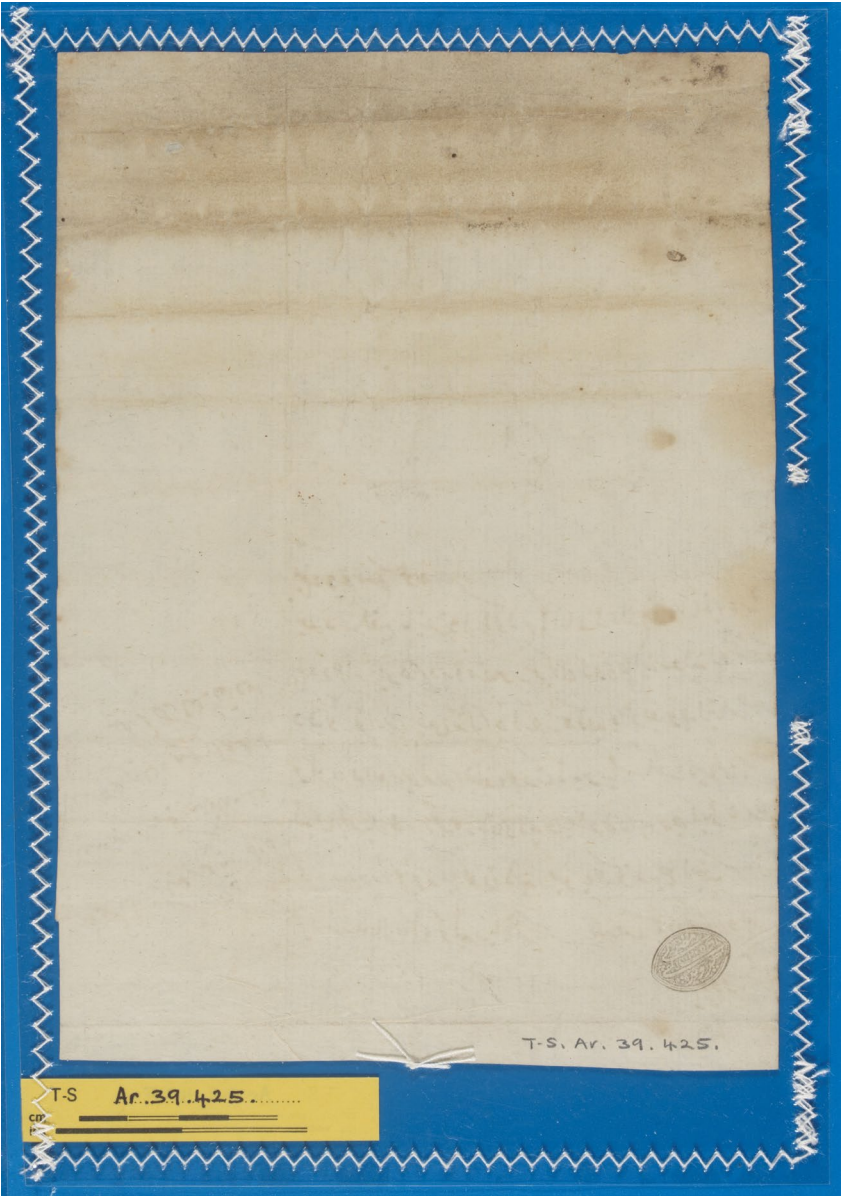


Plate XI: T-S AS 178.88, recto. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Plate XII: T-S AS 178.88, verso. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



DOCUMENT 4: MOSSERI XA.3.10¹¹

**A PETITION FROM SALMŪN'S
SUCCESSOR AS TAX FARMER OF
AL-KHAḌRA**

1.0. Discussion

This torn, crumpled, and stained document, in Ottoman Turkish, is another undated petition to an unnamed official. It is clearly closely related to T-S AS 178.88. The author, one Pinḥās son of Yūsuf, appears to be the successor to Salmūn al-Iskandārānī as tax farmer of al-Khaḍra, the *muqāṭaʿa* at the centre of the preceding document, and thus may be writing during the 1620s. Pinḥās is a Jewish name, and in addition, the word used for 'son' in his signature is not *ibn* but *veled* (*walad* in Arabic), which by convention was employed in Ottoman documents to indicate non-Muslim patronyms. We do not know whether Pinḥās likewise succeeded Salmūn as farmer of Alexandria's customs. In any case, he is acquiring al-Khaḍra for a substantial increase (*ziyāde*) in the purchase price, a fact that indicates that the village had produced higher revenues than expected during Salmūn's tenure (see the discussion of Ch. 1, Doc. 2).

¹¹ My thanks to Marina Rustow for alerting me to this document and to Dr Ben Outhwaite of Cambridge University Libraries for providing me with a remarkably clear image of it.

Pinḥās cites a potential obstacle to his acceptance, however: Salmūn has sold subordinate parts of this tax farm to another Jewish entrepreneur, Saʿadia Cohen. During the seventeenth century, the standard practice was for the governor of Egypt or the Janissary officer who held the tax farm of Alexandria's or Damietta's customs to sublease it, in effect, to a prominent Jewish merchant, which was presumably how Salmūn came into his influential position. Subleasing a village tax farm—or, more specifically, selling off smaller blocs of revenue attached to the overall tax farm—was, in contrast, a novel innovation that Pinḥās clearly regards with suspicion. He asks the recipient of his petition—perhaps the governor of Egypt—to investigate Saʿadia, the purchaser of these subordinate tax farms.

The subordinate blocs in question are called Ḳāmiṣ/Qāmish (قاميش) and تخم in this document. These could be the names of villages whose revenues are included in the tax farm of al-Khaḍra. Ḳāmiṣ ('reed') is attested as a place name in other parts of the Ottoman Empire.¹² The pond known as Birkat al-Ḥabash, south of Fuṣṭāṭ, was sometimes known as Iṣṭabl Qāmish, and also located near Fuṣṭāṭ was a place known as Qāmish Marwān (al-Maqrizī, *Khīṭaṭ*, II:723–24; Khan 1993, 72, 75, 77 l. 12). Meanwhile, *takhm* in Arabic means a boundary or landmark. However,

¹² Ḳāmiṣ in Abkhazia in present-day northwestern Georgia (Evliyā, *Sey-āhatnāme*, 2, 53). There is a town called Ḳāmiṣlı (Qāmishli) in north-eastern Syria, on the Turkish border, and several towns and villages called Ḳāmiṣlı in Anatolia. Şarıḳāmiṣ ('Yellow Reed'), in northeastern Anatolia, is well-known as the site of a disastrous Ottoman defeat by Russian forces during World War I.

such place names do not occur in the vicinity of al-Khaḍra south-east of Alexandria or of Jazīrat al-Khaḍra near Rosetta or in Gharbiyya sub-province. The two terms could also refer to commodities that produce revenues included in the tax farm of al-Khaḍra. In Ottoman Egypt, *ḳāmuṣ* referred to sugar cane (also *şeker ḳāmuṣı*) while the Turkish word *tohum*, which today usually means ‘seed’, can also mean ‘grain’. Thus, Salmūn could have sold the tax farms of sugar cane and some kind of grain or seed to Sa‘adia, even though the tax farmer of al-Khaḍra should have been collecting these revenues himself, along with the other revenues produced in the territory of al-Khaḍra. Noteworthy in all these transactions is that the current and prospective tax farmers of al-Khaḍra, as well as the legally dubious sub-leaser of the two subordinate tax farms, are all Jewish merchants.

The Hebrew annotation at the top of the document has, on the face of it, nothing directly to do with the document’s main text: it alludes instead to a dispute involving several prominent rabbis/notables. However, the family of one of the notables is mentioned in another document in connection with a Sa‘adia Cohen, who could conceivably be the sub-leaser of the present document (see Textual Notes, Recto, Top Left Corner Perpendicular, ll. 4–5).

2.0. Text

Paper, badly crumpled, vertical tear about two-thirds of the way down the middle, dark stain at lower left. Measurements unavailable.

Recto

Top Left Corner, Perpendicular (Hebrew addendum)¹³

- | | |
|--|---|
| העדים ועל מלשינות זו ושנלקח מיס[יו?] [] | 1 |
| בתילוי [?] //רב// והוא דוחה [?] אני הולך למשנה [?] [] [ואשר יעידו
על כך [?]] | 2 |
| הם רבים ומכללם החכם הנעלה כה"ר [] [וכה"ר] | 3 |
| משה עטיה וכ"ר אברהם אריפול וכה"ר [] | 4 |
| משה אבי עטאר וכ"ר משה ׳ן היני | 5 |
| ונעשת אופן תחבולה עד אשר | 6 |
| הצילו אותו מידו מלתן [?] ריב[ית] [?] | 7 |
| לפני השר | 8 |

Heading

Huve

Main Text

1. Devletlü ve sa‘ādetlü ve mürüvvetlü //sultānım// ḥazretle-
rinin ḥāk-ı pāy-ı şerīflerine ‘arz-ı ḥālim budur ki: Ḥazra
muḳāṭa‘asına tābi‘
2. kāmıṣ ve toḥum [?] muḳāṭa‘aları vardır. Ḥazra ‘āmili
Salmūn kulları başka kāmıṣ muḳāṭa‘asın Sa‘diye Kohīn nām

¹³ My sincere thanks to Dotan Arad for his assistance with the transcrip-
tion and translation of the Hebrew text.

3. bir Yehūdīye otuz altı bin pāra[ya] bey' idüb ve tohum muḳāṭa'asın daḫi yiğirmi bir bin beş yüz pāraya
4. bey' idüb, ve ḳāmiş muḳāṭa'asının senesi tamām olub, defter mücebince ṭoksān bin pāra taḫşıl
5. olunmuş, māl-i mīrīdir. Bu ḳulun yüklenen beş yüz altuna mezbūr [Sa'diye?] teftiş olmak şartıyla
6. yiğirmi bin pāra ziyādesiyle ḳabūl iderim. Ümīd budur ki mezbūr Ḥazra 'āmīli ve Sa'diye huzūr-ı
7. şerīfinize iḫzār olub ve huzūr-ı şerīfinizde sicill olub, ḳulun bu minvāl üzerine [sic] 'ināyet
8. buyurıla ki varub, ḥidmetim üzere olub, murādım sulṭānıma ḥidmet ve mīriye sa'y eylemekdir. Ve bu umūra
9. mü'ekked çavuş 'ināyet buyurıla. Bāḳī fermān sulṭānımındır.

Signature

1. Bende-i
2. el-faḳīr
3. Pinḫās veled-i
4. Yūsuf

Verso: Blank

3.0. Textual Notes

Recto

Top Left Corner, Perpendicular (Hebrew addendum)

2. כך ועל אשר יעידו על כך 'and that to which they will testify in that regard': The ends of the first three lines are torn away. These words are Dotan Arad's reconstruction of the text's probable meaning.
- 4–5. אריפול אברהם אריפול משה בן חניני personal names: As Alan Elbaum points out, Avraham Arīpol is attested in T-S 13J4.21, Moshe ibn Hīnī in T-S 13J24.24 and T-S 13J7.30. A Ya'kov ibn Hīnī is mentioned in Bodl. MS heb. b 11/16, which also mentions a Sa'adia Cohen, and in ENA NS 50.25, recto l. 2.
6. ונעשית 'and it was done' is probably a scribal error for ונעשית.

Main Text

- 2, 6. 'āmili (عاملي) 'tax farmer [of]' is an alternative spelling for عاملي.
7. *bu minvāl üzeline* 'in this manner': This should properly be *bu minvāl üzere*.

4.0. Translation

Recto

Top Left Corner, Perpendicular (Hebrew addendum)

1. the witnesses, and concerning this slander, and that which was taken from [his] taxes [?] []
2. by //great// force,¹⁴ and he rejected it [and says], ‘I am going to the sub-/vice-’,¹⁵ [] [and that to which they will testify in that regard is that [?]]
3. they are numerous, and among them is the exalted sage K[avod] h[a-]R[av] [the honourable rabbi] [] [and K[avod] h[a-]R[av]]
4. Moshe ‘Aṭiyya and K[avod ha-] R[av] Avraham Arīpol and K[avod] h[a-]R[av]
5. Moshe Abi ‘Aṭṭār and K[avod ha-] R[av] Moshe [ib]n Hīnī.
6. This was done by way of a ruse, until
7. he was rescued from his hand, from giving [i.e., paying] interest
8. in front of the minister/vizier.

¹⁴ Cf. b. Bava Batra 47b: תליוהו חבין זביניה זביני ('If one were suspended [i.e., strung up, and thereby coerced to sell a certain item], and he sold it, his sale is valid'). My thanks to Dotan Arad for this insight.

¹⁵ Possibly the deputy governor of Egypt, or *qā'im maqām*, is intended.

Heading

He [i.e., God]

Main Text

1. My petition to the noble dust under the feet of his excellency my honoured, esteemed, and munificent //lord// is as follows: Attached to the tax farm of al-Khaḍra
2. are the tax farms of sugar cane and grain/seeds [?]. The tax farmer of al-Khaḍra, the slave Salmūn, has separately sold the sugar cane tax farm to a Jew named Saʿadia Cohen
3. for 36,000 *pāras* and has sold the grain/seed tax farm for an additional 21,500 *pāras*.
4. [Now] the sugar cane tax farm's annual term is complete, and, per the register, 90,000 *pāras* have been collected,
5. and they [belong to] the state revenues. This slave [i.e., the writer] accepts [the tax farm] for the 500 gold pieces that he has agreed to [lit., 'undertaken'],
6. with an increase [in the purchase price] of 20,000 *pāras*, on the condition that the aforementioned [Saʿadia?] be investigated. My wish is that the aforementioned tax farmer of al-Khaḍra and Saʿadia
7. be summoned into your noble presence, and that [the changes to the tax farm] be registered in your noble presence. In this manner, do your slave the favour

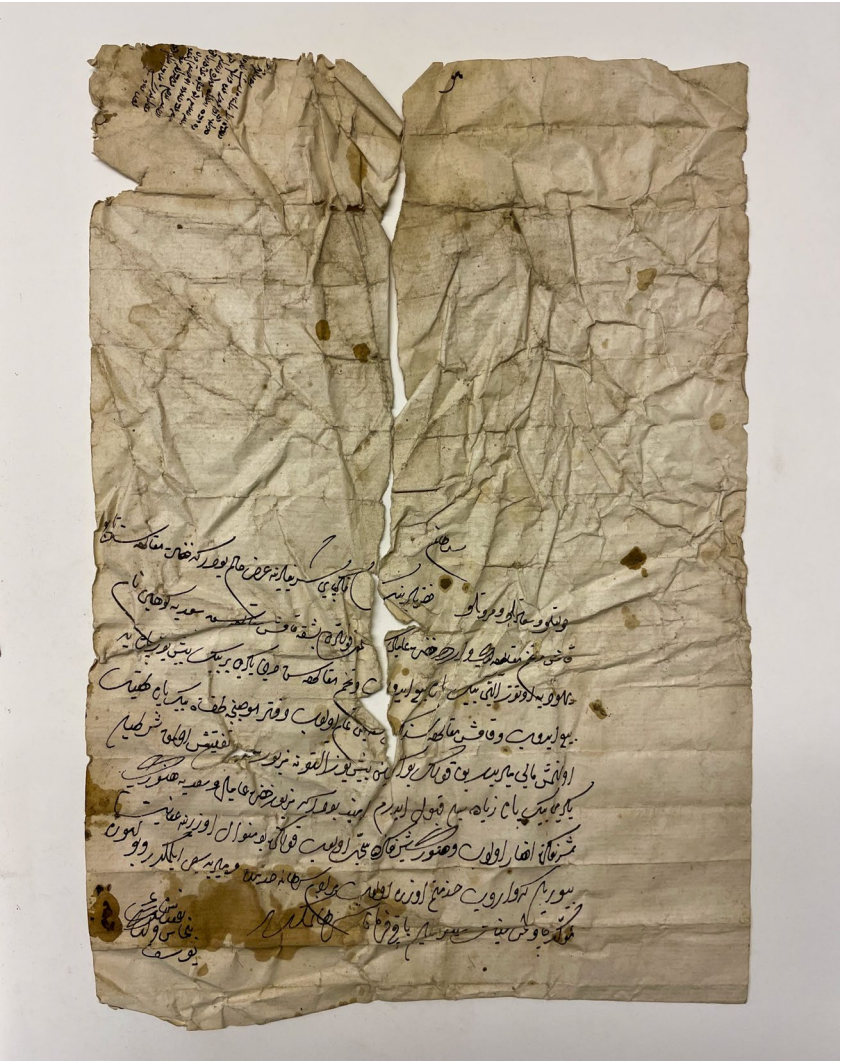
8. of letting me arrive [in al-Khaḍra] and do my duty. My desire is to render service to my lord and strive for the state. Do the favour of sending the confirmed *çavuş* [to attend to] these matters.
9. The eternal command is my lord's.

Signature

1. The slave,
2. the poor one,
3. Pinḥās son of
4. Yūsuf

Verso: Blank

Plate XIII: Mosseri Xa.3.10, recto. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



DOCUMENT 5: ENA 3941.4

A SALARY RECEIPT FROM MEHMET 'ALİ
PASHA'S SILK FACTORY, 1824

1.0. Discussion

This brief document is a receipt for a salary payment from the director of a silk factory in Alexandria to the gatekeeper (*baw-wāb*) of the *wakāla* where the factory was probably located. It is noteworthy for reflecting the changes to Alexandria's economy, and the economy of Egypt in general, wrought by the autonomous governor Meḥmed 'Alī Pasha (r. 1220–64 AH/1805–48 CE). Ibrāhīm, the gatekeeper of the Wakālat al-Biṭāsh, receives a salary of 20 *pāras*, a.k.a. *nişf fidḍa*, and six Rūmī *ghurūsh*, or piastres, the large silver coins used in the Ottoman central lands in lieu of the *akçe* from 1690–1844,¹⁶ from the grandee al-Ḥājī 'Umar Agha, who is styled *nāẓir anwāl al-ḥarīr*, or supervisor of the silk looms. Before the nineteenth century, the title *nāẓir* was associated with *waqf* supervision (see Ch. 3, Doc. 1). Under Meḥmed 'Alī Pasha's industrialisation scheme, however, a *nāẓir* was usually the overseer of a state-run factory. In 1816, the pasha abolished the craft organisations (*aşnāf*, or *eşnāf* in Ottoman Turkish) of spinners and weavers, as well as in-home production of yarn and cloth, forcing all such craftsmen and women into

¹⁶ Raymond (1973–74, I:38–39); Pamuk (1994, 966–70; 2000, 159–60); see the discussion of Ch. 3, Doc. 6, and Ch. 4, Doc. 4.

state-run textile factories, the first of which opened in 1817 (Overton 1971, 81–82). The majority of these factories produced cotton and linen cloth through either mechanised or non-mechanised means. However, silk weaving constituted between two and three percent of the state textile factories' total output by the late 1830s (Panza and Williamson 2015, 82, 83).

During the medieval and early modern eras, only small quantities of inferior silk were produced in Egypt since the climate was generally too hot and dry for the cultivation of mulberry trees and the incubation of silkworms (Goitein 1967, 101–2, 103; Hathaway 2003, 137). Meḥmed 'Alī, however, planted millions of mulberry trees in the Upper Egyptian provinces of Fayyūm and Asyūṭ, as well as in the eastern Nile Delta, in an effort to avoid importing the raw material for his factories (Marsot 1983, 179–80; Owen 1993, 66, 69). The Delta trees would have supplied Alexandria's silkworks.

Most silk was woven in Cairo, where factories, staffed initially by weavers from Italy and Anatolia, emerged in the Khurunfish and Birkat al-Fīl neighbourhoods in 1816 (Marsot 1983, 167, 169–70, 194; Owen 1993, 69). By the time this document was written, however, most silk factory workers were conscripted peasants or working-class urbanites with few or none of the skills required for silk-weaving. Yet they, and the *nāẓir*, risked severe punishment if they did not produce a set quota of silk each month (Overton 1971, 81–91; Fahmy 1998, 161–62). By 1818, as a partial result, the Birkat al-Fīl factory had closed while the Khurunfish factory had shifted to the more widespread and lucrative cot-

ton production (Marsot 1983, 174; Owen 1993, 69). On the evidence of this document and others like it, however, silk production in Alexandria survived for at least several more years (JRL Gaster ar. 49, 54, 61, 94, 157; JRL Series A 784, 792). Nonetheless, the lack of skilled personnel in general contributed to the closure of virtually all of Meḥmed ‘Alī’s factories by the time of the pasha’s death in 1265 AH/1849 CE (Overton 1971, 92).

Historically, the *wakāla* was a sort of urban caravanserai that functioned as both warehouse and market, particularly for cash crops such as flax and coffee; during the Ottoman era, *wakālas* for both these commodities were founded by governors of Egypt, other Ottoman officials, including exiled Chief Harem Eunuchs, and provincial grandees.¹⁷ The *Wakālat al-Biṭāsh*, however, was founded under Meḥmed ‘Alī Pasha in Alexandria’s Biṭāsh neighbourhood, which borders the city’s western harbour, probably to serve as a textile factory and warehouse. The edifice is still standing today (Nassar, Elcherif, and Naguib 2018, 3). It may have housed silk looms while also storing both the raw silk fibre that the factory spun into cloth and the finished cloth that the factory produced for sale. In these circumstances, Ibrāhīm the *bawwāb* would have supervised the coming and going of the weavers, in addition to the influx of raw silk and the outflow of finished cloth. Similarly, the witness to this document, Aḥmad Ghānim the *ḥücreci*, may have supervised the chambers (Arabic singular, *ḥujra*; Turkish, *hücret*) where the looms were located and the weavers plied their trade.

¹⁷ Goitein (1967, 186–92, 194–95); Hathaway (1994, 296, 302, 305–8; 2018a, 184, 186–87, 191).

Ibrāhīm's salary payment is registered with the Dīwān Anwāl al-Ḥarīr (Bureau of Silk Looms), one of the administrative innovations that characterised Meḥmed 'Alī's industrialisation scheme (Overton 1971, 81). Similar receipts from the Genizah attest that the cashier (*ṣarrāf*) for this bureau during the early 1820s was one Mu'allim Mūsā Na'im, a Jewish banker who apparently worked under the same 'Umar Agha's supervision (see the documents listed above and Dudley 2024). Such government bureaus represented an effort to control and document the output of all of Egypt's nascent industries, from textile-weaving to sugar-refining. The receipt itself is a specimen of the standardised forms—initially handwritten, like this one, later printed—that became the norm for all transactions involving the government under Meḥmed 'Alī and his successors (Fahmy 1997, 109–10; cf. 107–8, 142–47, 153–55). The machine-made perforations on the left-hand side of the recto, in contrast, were presumably added by a curator connected with the Elkan Nathan Adler Genizah collection for the purpose of binding this document with others. Such perforations feature in many ENA documents from a range of periods (e.g., ENA 3925.6, ENA 3936.1, ENA 3936.3).

2.0. Text

Paper, slight tear at lower right, perforations along left margin.
90.00 mm x 110.00 mm.

Recto

- | | |
|--|---|
| وداعة | 1 |
| من يد قدوة الاكابر وعمدة الاعيان ذو العز والشان حضرة | 2 |
| سيدنا الامير المكرم الحاج عمر اغاه ناظر انوال الحرير لشغر سكندرية وذلك | 3 |
| قبض ابراهيم بواب وكالة البيطاش نظير جمكيتة المقييدة | 4 |
| بديوان انوال الحرير بالثغر المذكور عن شهر جماد اخر سنة ١٢٣٩ تسعة وثلاثون | 5 |

Below

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| شهر: ١ | 1 |
| عشرين | 2 |
| بارة غروش [؟] | 3 |
| ستة | 4 |
| ٦ ٢٠ | 5 |

Below

ستة غروش رومي و بارة عشرين فقط لاغير

Witness

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| شهد بذلك | 1 |
| احمد غانم الحجرة جي [؟] | 2 |
| الزبيدي [؟] | 3 |

Verso: Blank

3.0. Textual Notes

Recto

3. اغاه ‘*agha*’ is an alternative spelling for اغا.
5. جمادى الاخر, the Islamic month *Jumādā al-Ākhir*, is ordinarily rendered جمادى الاخر or occasionally جمادة الاخرة.

Below

غير ‘other’ or ‘else’ is here rendered غير, with an additional ي.

4.0. Translation

Recto

1. Deposits
2. from the hand of the exemplar of the great and support of the notables, of power and renown, his excellency
3. our master the noble *amīr* al-Ḥājī ‘Umar Agha, supervisor of the silk looms for the port of Alexandria. That [amount]
4. was collected by Ibrāhīm, the gatekeeper of *Wakālat al-Bīṭāsh*, as his salary, registered
5. in the Bureau of Silk Looms in the aforementioned port for the month of *Jumād[ā al-]Ākhir*, the year 1239, thirty-nine [~ February 1824].

Below

1. Month: 1
2. twenty
3. *pāras* *ghurūsh* [?]
4. six
5. 20 6

Below

Six Rūmī *ghurūsh* and twenty *pāras* only, nothing else.

Witness

Aḥmad Ghānim al-Zabīdī [?] the *ḥücreci* [?] (chamber-supervisor) bore witness to that.

Verso: Blank

3. INTER- AND INTRACOMMUNAL COMMERCIAL TRANSACTIONS

The seven documents in this chapter concern trade and fiscal transactions involving merchants, provincial notables, and, in two cases, military officers. It is, admittedly, difficult to categorise the personages who appear in these documents since the boundaries separating government official, tribal chieftain, or military officer from merchant or money-lender were extremely fluid and, in some cases, non-existent. Thus, in Document 2, a Jewish merchant finds himself selling off the textiles of an executed Bedouin shaykh who, on the evidence of Document 1, once supervised the tax farmer of a key Nile Delta village. In Document 3, an officer from the imperial palace receives a shipment of sheep from Upper Egypt. Document 4 describes a network of money-lending and sugar provisioning that incorporates the Jewish merchant who serves as banker (*ṣarrāf*) to Egypt's Ottoman governor, along with tax farmers from throughout the Nile Delta. And while the last three documents relate almost solely to merchants, the merchants in question also lend money (Doc. 6) or trade in a range of commodities that can also function as cash equivalents (Docs 4–5).

Jewish merchants feature in all of these documents except for Document 1 and, possibly, Document 7, in which the confessional affiliation of the writer is unclear, though his 'brothers' are clearly Christian. These merchants function variously as money-lenders, bankers, tax farmers, and traders, with several of them

combining two or more of these roles. Noteworthy, as well, are the clientage ties that bind many of these merchants to high-ranking administrators and military officers, particularly in the pre-nineteenth-century documents. To be sure, though, the more prominent transregional Jewish merchants had clients of their own working as agents in various locales.

The commodities and goods that were the objects of the multifaceted transactions represented here held great importance in Egypt, as in much of the Mediterranean, throughout the Islamic era and are well-attested in the 'classical' Genizah: sheep, sugar, gum arabic, coral, textiles, and finished clothing.¹ Trade in these items linked various parts of Egypt while connecting Egypt to other parts of the Ottoman Empire and to the greater Mediterranean and Red Sea regions. Thus sheep from Upper Egypt reached Cairo by ship (Doc. 3), and sugar (Doc. 4) moved through the Nile Delta to the Mediterranean ports and on to Istanbul. Meanwhile, coral (Doc. 5) came from the northern Mediterranean and was exchanged for gum arabic from the caravan city of Sennār in Sudan, where the lengthy reign of the Funj Sultanate (910–1287 AH/1504–1871 CE) ensured a steady flow of commerce between Egypt and its southern neighbour. At the

¹ Goitein 1967, 76, 105 (sheep); 125–26, 154, 185, 195, 252 (sugar); 154 (gum arabic); 47, 100, 153, 154, 155, 177, 199, 222 (coral); 86, 98, 104–5, 198, 210 (linen); 86, 101–4, 153, 154, 195, 203, 210, 222–24, 303 (silk); 150, 203, 210, 229 (clothing); Goitein 1978, 59 (clothing); Goitein 1983, 165–67 (linen); 167–70 (silk); 166, 184–85, 188, 190 (clothing).

same time, the long arm of the state—either the Ottoman imperial government in Istanbul or the regime of Meḥmed ‘Alī Pasha, the autonomous governor of Egypt—is perceptible in several of these transactions. The Ottoman sultan ordered the execution of Ibn Baghdād, occasioning the sale of his textiles, described in Document 2. Document 4’s sugar was left over from the supply that Egypt sent to the imperial palace every year. Meḥmed ‘Alī Pasha’s 1821 invasion of Sudan may have contributed to the separation of the ‘brothers’ of Document 7.

DOCUMENT 1: T-S AR. 39.341

A LETTER TO THE BEDOUIN CHIEFTAIN MUḤAMMAD IBN BAGHDĀD, MID-16TH CENTURY

1.0. Discussion

This short and, unfortunately, incomplete letter addresses Muḥammad ibn Baghdād, chief of the powerful Baghdādī Bedouin confederation. While the Banū Baghdād may have originated as an Amazigh (Berber) population that migrated into Egypt from the west (al-Jazīrī [mid-sixteenth century], *Al-Durar al-farā'id*, 1888–89), they had established themselves in the Nile Delta sub-province of Gharbiyya, along the western arm of the Nile north of Cairo, by the latter part of the Mamluk Sultanate. The chronicler Ibn Iyās mentions their chieftains occasionally in his coverage of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.² Following the Ottoman conquest of Egypt, the Baghdādī clan extended its influence into neighbouring Minūfiyya sub-province, becoming one of the most formidable Bedouin clans in Lower Egypt.³ They are named as *meṣāyih-i 'Urbān* (Arabic, *mashāyikh*

² Ibn Iyās (*Histoire des Mamlouks circassiens*, II:27; *Journal d'un bourgeois du Caire*, I:179, 232, 239).

³ Winter (1992, 81, 84, 87, 90, 91–92, 95–97); Garcin (1998, 315); Michel (2019, 45).

al-ʿUrbān) in the *Ḳānūnnāme-i Mıṣır*, the 1525 law code that systematised Ottoman administration in Egypt, which specifies that the *shaykh al-ʿArab* of a sub-province held the authority of a *kāshif*, the title of the chief administrators in sub-provinces not dominated by Bedouin.⁴

Toward the middle of the sixteenth century, however, the Banū Baghdād lost the favour of the Ottoman central authority, as the chronicle of the sixteenth-century Egyptian scribe ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jazirī (*Al-Durar al-farāʿid*, 1032) recounts. Muḥammad ibn Baghdād, the recipient of this letter, was executed in 1550, twelve years after the execution of his father. Two of his brothers would likewise be executed in 1555 and 1561. Following the elimination of these older generations of Banī Baghdād, the Ottoman governors of Egypt during the early 1570s intervened repeatedly to replace one younger clan member with another as *amīr* of Minūfiyya (al-Iṣḥāqī, *Akḥbār al-uwal*, 152; Winter 1992, 91–92, 95–96). By the time the traveller Evliyā Çelebi visited Minūfiyya, toward the end of the seventeenth century, the Banū Baghdād were a distant memory in the sub-province, though their descendants and architectural monuments were ubiquitous in one district in particular (Evliyā, *Seyāḥatnāme*, 331–32).

The Banū Baghdād’s principal aim in expanding from Gharbiyya into Minūfiyya was to obtain revenue-collection rights in as many parts of these two sub-provinces as possible. Kūm al-Ḍabb, the Minūfiyya village that is the focus of our letter, exem-

⁴ *Mıṣır Ḳānūnnāmesi* (363, 364); Winter (1992, 88–89, 90–91); cf. Ch. 2, Doc. 3.

plifies this strategy. Located roughly eighty-six kilometres northwest of Cairo and just east of the sub-provincial capital, Menouf, it was endowed to the *waqf* of the powerful Mamluk *amīr* Yashbak al-Ashrafī, a.k.a. Yashbak min Mahdi (d. 445 AH/1480 CE), the *dawadār*, or secretary, of Sultan al-Ashraf Qaytbay (r. 872–901 AH/1468–96 CE).⁵ The author of the letter is the *amīr* Muẓaffar, who is *nāẓir*, or superintendent, of the revenues that the village produces for the *waqf*. It is possible that he holds this position because of Ibn Baghdād. Retaining control of the village's revenues would have been a priority for Ibn Baghdād; in general, the tax farms of *waqf* villages in Egypt were choice prizes for aspiring grandees (Hathaway 1997b, 156–60).

Obviously, this letter must have been written before Muḥammad ibn Baghdād's execution in 1550. Because parts of it have been torn away, it is not clear what Muẓaffar wants from Ibn Baghdād. He seems to be concerned about his relations with the peasant (*fallāḥ*) inhabitants of the village, whose labour, after all, produces the revenue that he has been appointed to collect. To judge from his letter, Kūm al-Dabb is dominated by the extended family of Muḥammad ibn Būsa' (?),⁶ whose brothers and cousins are invoked in the letter. Apart from Muḥammad, the

⁵ Ibn Iyās (*Histoire des Mamlouks circassiens*, II:190–92); Halm (1982, 367).

⁶ It is also possible that this name is Yūsha', the Arabic form of Yehoshua, or Joshua, which is unequivocally a Jewish name. In that case, either Muḥammad or his father would have converted to Islam from Judaism, and most of the relatives cited here would be either Jews or fairly recent converts to Islam. Another possibility is al-Rabī'.

only villager whom Muẓaffar names is Ḥasan al-Mursī/Sarsī/Sūsī, presumably a Muslim.

2.0. Text

Paper, bottom torn away. 16.50 cm x 11.00 cm.

Recto

- 1 بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
- 2 بعد التحية والتسليم والعز والتكريم بحضرته الجنب الكريم المخدم الامير
- 3 محمد ابن بغداد شيخ العرب ونور فضائله يوضح لعلمه الكريم ان من الجاري
- 4 قد تكلم المملوك ناحية كوم الضب بالمنوفية وقد تحمد لنا على فلاحين
بالناحية
- 5 المذكورة هم محمد بن بوسع [؟] واخوته وبني عمه وحسن المرسى [؟]
واولاد عمه و من شركهم
- [The beginning of the following line is torn away.]
- 6 [] ولم يبق حوائجه مع ذلك واخر ذلك بجائز [؟]
- [The last line is almost entirely torn away.]

Verso: Address

Right Column: The Addressee

- 1 المخدمومي
- 2 لجناب الكريم الامير محمد ابن بغداد اعزه الله تعالى وابقاه بمخدمومه

Left Column: The Sender

مطالعه	1
الامير مظفر ناظر الكوم	2

3.0. Textual Notes

Recto

2. الجنب lit. ‘the side’: This is an honorific commonly used for an eminent figure. See Liebreinz (2022, Letters 2–192 *passim*); and Textual Notes to Ch. 2, Doc. 1, and Ch. 3, Docs 5 and 6.
4. تكلم ‘speaks [for]’: The verb used is similar to تحدث, used to describe speaking for or responsibility for a specific population (in that case, Cairo’s Rabbanite Jews) in T-S Ar. 51.104 (Ch. 4, Doc. 2). See also Little (1984, 200).
4. كوم الضب name of a village in Minūfiyya: Halm (1982, 367) renders the village’s name Kōm ad-Ḍab’. Toussoun (1928, 267; 1936, 491) renders the name variously Kom el-Dabaâ, Kom el-Dab, and Kom el-Dab’. It appears that the village’s name was sometimes spelled with a final ‘ayn.

Verso

Right Column

1. مطالعه ‘his informer’: For this usage, see Little (1984, 23, 51).

4.0. Translation

Recto

1. In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate.
2. After greetings and salutations and the glory and veneration for his munificent, lordly excellency the *amīr*
3. Muḥammad ibn Baghdād, Shaykh al-‘Arab and the light of their [i.e., the Arabs’] elect, I bring to his noble attention that among the occurrences [is that]
4. the slave [i.e., the writer of the letter] speaks for the district of Kūm al-Ḍabb in Minūfiyya and is exalted over the peasants of the aforementioned district,
5. namely, Muḥammad b. Busa^ʿ [?] and his brothers and cousins, and Ḥasan al-Mursī [?] and his cousins and those who partnered with them.

[The beginning of the following line is torn away.]

6. [] he [the letter-writer] has no other needs, however, and after that, legally [?]

[The last line is almost entirely torn away.]

Verso: Address

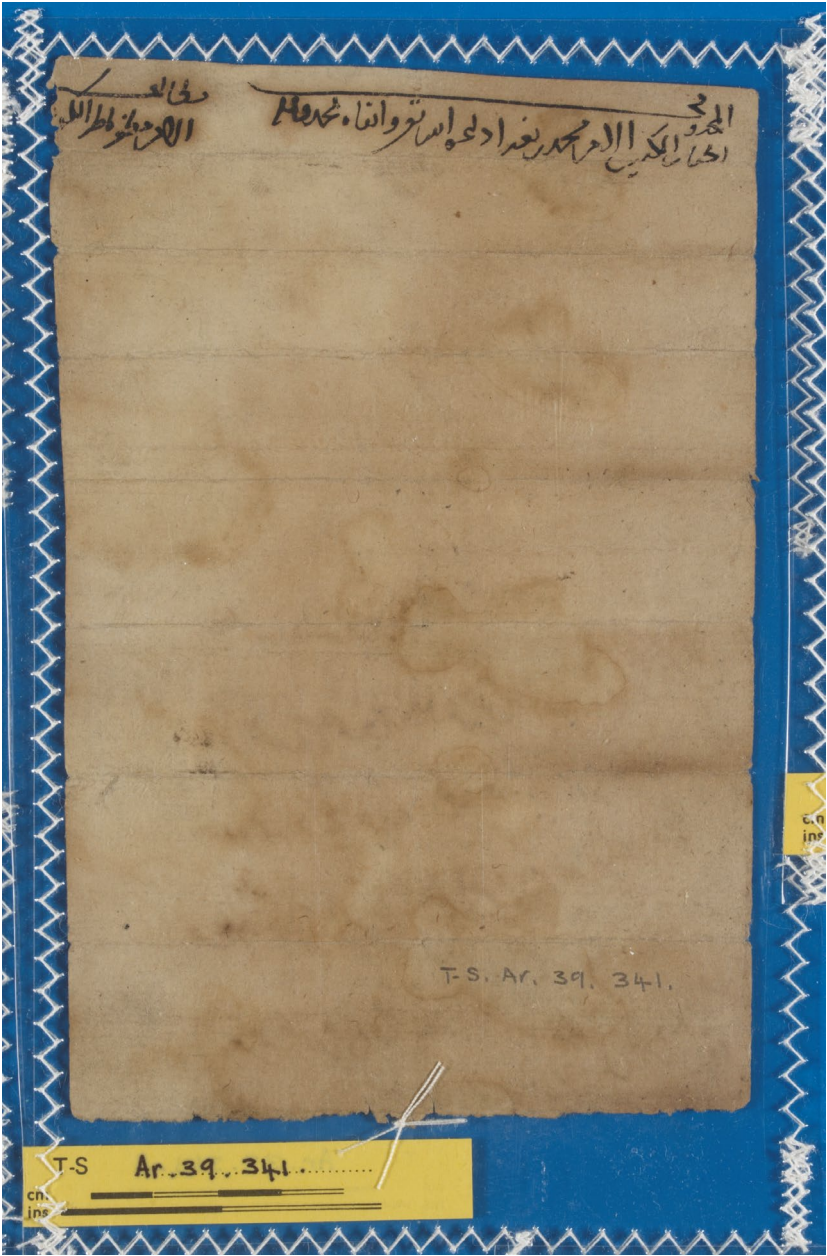
Right Column: The Addressee

1. The lordly,
2. noble excellency, the *amīr* Muḥammad ibn Baghdād, may God the exalted make him glorious and sustain him in his lordship

Left Column: The Sender

1. His informer,
2. the *amīr* Muḥaffar,
3. *nāẓir* of al-Kūm

Plate XVI: T-S Ar. 39.341, verso. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



DOCUMENT 2: ENA 3959.1

SELLING IBN BAGHDĀD'S TEXTILES IN THE KHĀN AL-KHALĪLĪ, MID-16TH CENTURY

1.0. Discussion

This Ottoman Turkish petition is addressed to an unnamed Ottoman official, quite possibly the governor of Egypt, since the author introduces key personages with minimal explanation, as if his addressee has prior familiarity with the provincial scene. The author, a merchant called Mūsā, asks the official to rescue him from an onerous situation into which he has stumbled. He is apparently a client of Maḥmūd Kethüdā, almost certainly an officer in Egypt's Janissary regiment. Maḥmūd in turn has links to another Jewish merchant who had come to Cairo to dispose of the estate of a member of the Banī Baghdād, the powerful Bedouin tribe, mentioned in the previous document, who dominated Gharbiyya and Minūfiyya sub-provinces during the sixteenth century. This could conceivably be Muḥammad ibn Baghdād, the chieftain addressed in the previous document, or possibly another of the several family members whom the Ottoman governor executed or deposed between 1538 and 1561 (discussion of Ch. 3, Doc. 1, above). Thus, this petition probably dates from the middle years of the sixteenth century, and the disposition of the estate almost surely follows on an execution.

Ibn Baghdād's estate seems to consist largely of clothing or, perhaps more accurately, textiles (Egyptian colloquial *aswāb*, standard Arabic *athwāb*, literally 'robes'). This is consistent with what few details of Bedouin life and custom we can glean from chronicles of Ottoman Egypt. Sixteenth-century chronicles note Bedouin populations hiding their textiles or depositing them with peasants, along with livestock and money, when under attack (Winter 1992, 82). Even today, transhumant populations in the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Caucasus are famous for weaving rugs and blankets (Housego 1978; Opie 2016). The Banū Baghdād, who were not transhumant but were settled in Minūfiyya and Gharbiyya, may have produced textiles for sale and also purchased them for redistribution around the Nile Delta.

Textiles that formed part of an estate could be sold to generate income for heirs or for charitable purposes. This was what 'Ināyat, Ibn Baghdād's Jewish *ṣarrāf*, or accountant/banker, was doing when he unexpectedly died: he had set up shop in what is to this day Cairo's largest and most famous covered bazaar, the Khān al-Khalīlī, founded in the late fourteenth century. On the evidence of this document, the Banū Baghdād relied rather heavily on Jewish *ṣarrāfs*. Maḥmūd Kethūdā probably summoned Mūsā to take over the sale of the textiles when 'Ināyat died, in effect replacing one Jewish *ṣarrāf* with another. In that case, Maḥmūd Kethūdā must himself have been a client of the Banī Baghdād; powerful Bedouin chiefs commonly had clients and slaves in Cairo and other major towns (al-Damūrdāshī, *al-Durra al-muṣāna*, 492; Winter 1992, 93–94).

The problem that triggered the petition arose when Maḥmūd Kethūdā in turn died, leaving Mūsā without the protection of his patron. So consistent was the association of the Banī Baghdād with Jewish *ṣarrāfs*, it appears, that the powers that be at the Khān al-Khalīlī—who may have included Cairo's market inspector, or *muḥtasib*—assumed that Mūsā must be part of Ibn Baghdād's entourage and would not allow him to abandon his textile sales. He may have elected to petition the official because there was no obvious opponent to take to court: Ibn Baghdād and everyone involved in disposing of his estate were dead.

An intriguing feature of Mūsā's petition is that he asks the official to impose the *sharī'a*, confident that if Islamic law is properly observed, he cannot be forced to sell Ibn Baghdād's textiles. In fact, *sharī'a* law on partnerships implies that only the legal parties to a commercial partnership can be held liable to fulfil the terms of the partnership, in the same way that only legal partners are entitled to shares of a deceased partner's unsold goods or profits (Hasanuzzaman 1971, esp. 323–27). Thus Mūsā, who is not 'Ināyat's partner and who stepped in as a favour to his own patron, should by all rights be free of any responsibility to Ibn Baghdād's estate. His petition seeks to subvert the automatic association of the Banī Baghdād with Jewish merchants, a connection that could partially explain why the Bedouin clan appears in the Ottoman-era Genizah documents in the first place.

2.0. Text

Paper, stains at top and sides, slight tearing along edges. 200.00 mm x 220.00 mm.

Recto

Heading

Huve

Main Text

1. Sulṭānım ḥazretlerinin ḥāk-ı pāy-ı şerīflerine ‘arz-ı bende-i bī-mikdār ve zerre-i ḥāksār budur ki ben ḥākīr faķīrū’l-ḥāl ve zū-‘iyāl
2. olub, Maḥmūd Kethüdā ‘Ināyet nām Yehūdī şarrāfı Bağdādoğlu’nun mevcūdātı için şayrāfı
3. gönderüb, bunda Mısır’a geldikde, iki buçuk aydan soñra fevt oldı, ben ḥākīr daḥi Bağdādoğlu’nun
4. Ḥān-ı Ḥalīl’de şatılan esbābın aķçesi şayrāfisi olub, ḥāliyā Maḥmūd Kethüdā fevt ol[ub],
5. ‘Yehūdī’nin şerīkisin’ deyü dutub, ben ḥākīrden ḥaķķ taleb ider bī-günāh. Devletlü
6. sulṭānım’dan istid‘ā olunur ki ‘ale vechi’ş-şer‘ görüle tā ki ben ḥākīre zulm olmaya.
7. Sulṭānımın eyyām-ı ‘adāletler[inde] kimesneye zulm olmaz. Bāķī fermān devletlü sulṭānımındır. //El-faķīr el-ḥākīr// Mūsā

Verso: Blank

3.0. Textual Notes

Recto

4. *esbāb* (اسباب), ‘textiles’: This is the colloquial pronunciation of اثواب.
5. *dutub* (دوتوب), ‘detain’ is an alternative spelling for *tuṭub* (طوطوب).

4.0. Translation

Recto

Heading

He [i.e., God]

Main Text

1. This is the petition of the worthless slave, who is but a speck of dust, to the noble dust under the feet of my esteemed lord. I, the lowly one, am poor and have many dependents.
2. Maḥmūd Kethūdā sent a Jewish *ṣarrāf* named ‘Ināyet as an accountant for the estate of Ibn Baghdād,
3. [but] two and a half months after he arrived here in Cairo, he died, and I, the lowly one,

4. became the accountant for the money from Ibn Baghdād's textiles sold in Khān al-Khalīlī. Now that Mahmūd Kethūdā has [also] died,
5. they detain me, saying, 'You are the Jew's partner', and demand that I pay what was owed, [even though] I am innocent [of any debt].
6. It is requested of my illustrious lord that you impose the *sharī'a* so that I, the lowly one, am not oppressed.
7. In my lord's days of justice, no one can be oppressed. The eternal command is my illustrious lord's. [Signed] //the poor, lowly one// Mūsā

Verso: Blank

DOCUMENT 3: T-S AR. 39.370

A MISSING RECEIPT FOR SHEEP, LATE 16TH–EARLY 17TH CENTURY

1.0. Discussion

This is a terse, undated letter—really more like a note—signed by one Meḥmed Çavuş, who is obviously a military officer. To judge from his signature, he belongs to the imperial Çavuşân regiment or, alternatively, to the regiment of Çavuşân attached to the personal entourage of the governor of Egypt and known as the ‘corps of servants of the imperial palace’ (Ottoman Turkish, *Cemā‘at-ı Gilmân-ı Dergâh-ı ‘Âlî*). Members of the imperial Çavuşân acted as messengers for and escorts to the sultan; they were sometimes dispatched as emissaries to foreign governments. Occasionally, they travelled to the Ottoman provinces to supervise various fiscal and economic operations; this could conceivably be what Meḥmed Çavuş is doing in Egypt.⁷ Membership of either Çavuşân regiment would explain the rather puzzling phrase دركي عالي beneath his signature at the bottom of the document: it is probably an unconventional rendering of *dergâh-i ‘âlî* (درگاهِ عالي), literally, ‘the high [royal] court’ in Ottoman Turkish, which refers to the Ottoman palace. His seal, on the verso, gives his father’s name as Meḥmed, indicating that Meḥmed Çavuş is

⁷ Uzunçarşılı (1945b, 408–12, esp. 408–9); Shaw (1962, 194–96, 200).

not a *devshirme* recruit. It may well be that his father was a high-ranking military officer or official who saw to it that his son obtained a place in one or the other Çavuşân corps.

The rather awkward Arabic of the letter, characterised by the stilted use of the unadorned subjunctive, could indicate that Meḥmed Çavuş, who was probably more comfortable in Ottoman Turkish, wrote it himself. Yet the rather crude handwriting—definitely not that of a professional scribe or, on the other hand, that of an official trained at the court—as well as the unusual rendering of *dergâh-i ‘ālī*, suggests that Meḥmed employed an Arabophone underling to compose the note so that the recipient would understand it. As to the date of the letter, the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century seems likely since both Çavuşân regiments enjoyed their greatest influence during this period (Uzunçarşılı 1945b, 411; Shaw 1962, 195–96).

Meḥmed’s note is addressed to the Jewish *‘āmil*, or tax farmer, of Mişr al-Qadīma, whom he accuses of wrongfully taking a receipt for a shipment of sheep sent to Meḥmed by the *amīr* ‘Alī. Mişr al-Qadīma (literally, Old Cairo) is often construed as synonymous with Fuṣṭāṭ but refers more specifically to the port area of Fuṣṭāṭ bordering the Nile. It was Cairo’s southern Nile port, receiving mainly goods from Upper Egypt, while Būlāq, to the north, received goods from the Nile Delta. At the Nile ports, as at the Mediterranean ports, Jewish customs officials with the omnibus title *mu‘allim* played key roles. During the seventeenth century, Jewish merchants from Cairo customarily held the *muqāṭa‘a* known as *simsāriyya al-baḥrayn* (literally, ‘brokerage of the two seas’, meaning the two ports), entailing supervision of all

commercial transactions on the docks of Miṣr al-Qadīma and Būlāq; like the *muqāṭaʿa* of the two ports' customs, it was sold as a tax farm (Shaw 1962, 123–24; Raymond 1973–74, II:629–30). It seems likely that the *muʿallim* ʿāmil of the letter held this *muqāṭaʿa*.

Although Meḥmed's note does not specify that the sheep arrived at Miṣr al-Qadīma, it seems likely that they did. In that case, they probably came from Upper Egypt, and the *amīr* who sent them, ʿAlī, may be a *sanjāk beyi* or even a Bedouin chieftain in that region. Their arrival at this port would also explain the ʿāmil's interest in them and his seizure of the receipt from Meḥmed Çavuş's client ʿAṭīya.

This ʿAṭīya is one of two clients (Arabic plural, *atbāʿ*) of Meḥmed Çavuş mentioned in this document. The other is al-Ḥājj Munajjā, to whom the ʿāmil is to return the receipt. Meḥmed's reference to ʿAṭīya as *min jamāʿatinā* probably indicates that ʿAṭīya is also a member of the Çavuşān corps, in which case Meḥmed is probably his commanding officer (see Hathaway 1997b, 20, 37–44). Munajjā may have the same status as ʿAṭīya, or he could be a client acquired by other means.

2.0. Text

Paper. 19.50 cm x 14.20 cm.

Recto

- 1 الذي يعلم به المعلم العامل بمصر القديمة انك توصل البروة [؟] الذي اخذتها
- 2 من عطية لانه من جماعتنا ومن اتباعنا وان الامير علي ارسل لنا سربت [؟]
- 3 غنم وقدرها عشرين راس غنم الحذر ثم الحذر انك توصل البروة
- 4 للحاج منجى [؟] راجلنا من كل بد وسبب ولا تعطي تهاون في ذلك
- 5 ولا عذر ولا حيلة بوجه من الوجوه ولا عتما وعلى الختم
- 6 الصحيح فيه حجة والله اعلم

Signature

- 1 الفقير
- 2 محمد جاويش
- 3 دركي عالي

Verso: Seal of Mehmed Çavuş (upside-down)

- 1 الامير محمد
- 2 ابن
- 3 محمد

3.0. Textual Notes

Recto

- 1, 3. البروة ‘receipt’: This may be an unconventional spelling of براءة, ‘receipt’ or ‘release’. On this term, see Tillier and Vanthieghem (2024, 392).
2. سربت ‘flock’: This word is spelled with a final ت instead of the conventional *tā’ marbūṭa* (سربة).

Signature

3. دركي عالي ‘the high [royal] court’, referring to the Ottoman palace: If this is the correct reading, the phrase is conventionally rendered دركاهِ عالي. See the discussion of the document.

4.0. Translation

Recto

1. That of which I inform the *mu‘allim* the tax farmer of Miṣr al-Qadīma: please return the receipt [?] that you took
2. from ‘Aṭīya because he is from our division and from among our clients. Indeed, the *amīr* ‘Alī sent to us a flock [?]
3. of sheep numbering 20 head of sheep. Be very, very careful to deliver the receipt
4. to our man al-Ḥājj Munajjā [?] with all haste. Make sure there is no neglect in this,

5. and no excuse and no trick of any kind, and no delay. As to the correct seal [meaning Mehmed Çavuş's seal],
6. here [i.e., on the verso] is the proof. God knows best.

Signature

1. The poor one,
2. Mehmed Çavuş
3. [from] the imperial palace

Verso: Seal of Mehmed Çavuş (upside-down)

1. The *amīr* Mehmed
2. son of
3. Mehmed

Plate XVIII: T-S Ar. 39.370, recto. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

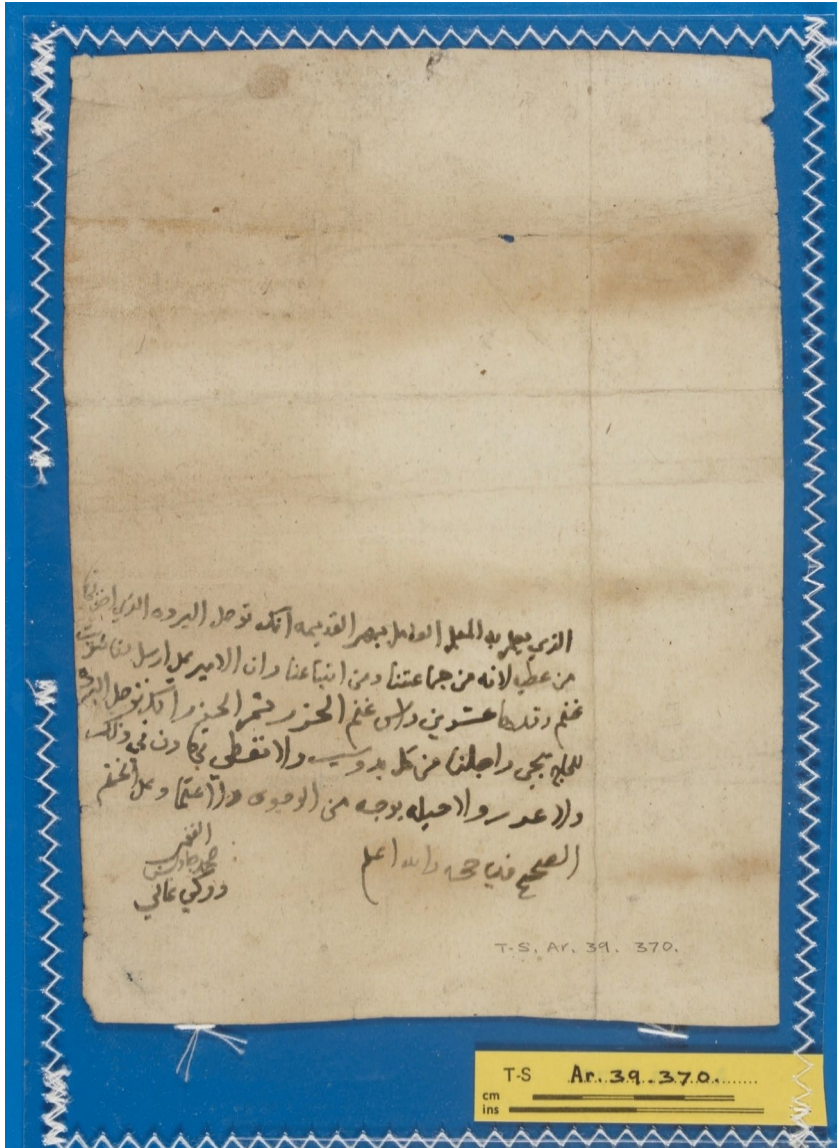
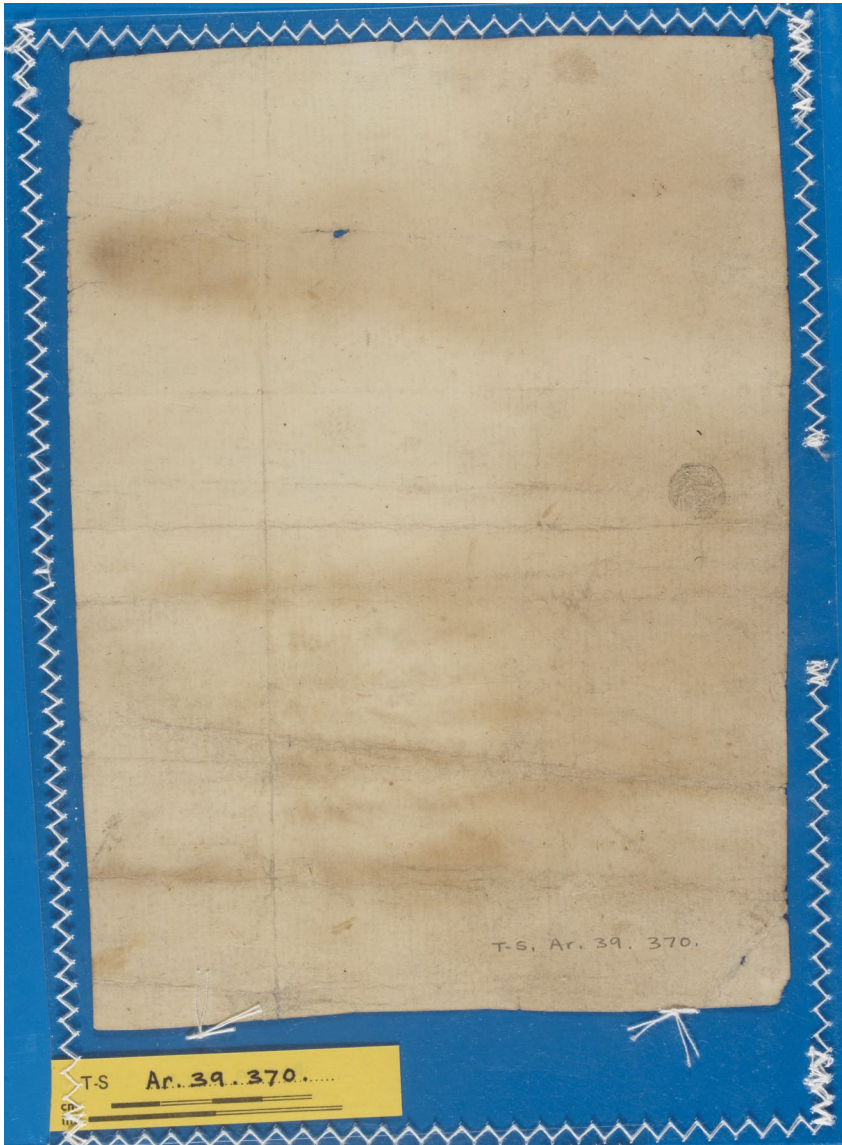


Plate XIX: T-S Ar. 39.370, verso. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



DOCUMENT 4: AIU XII.173

DELIVERY OF SUGAR AND PAYMENT OF A DEBT, 1649

1.0. Discussion

This is an Arabic court case summary, dated Shawwāl 1059/October 1649, documenting a purchase of sugar by a Jewish official from a Muslim sub-provincial tax farmer and the tax farmer's delivery of the sugar, along with repayment of a debt to the official. Sugar had been produced in Lower Egypt since the eighth century CE and spread into Upper Egypt during the Fatimid period (358–567 AH/969–1171 CE).⁸ By the Ottoman era, cultivation of sugar cane and production of sugar were widespread throughout Egypt. Cairo alone counted 40 sugar factories in the late seventeenth century, employing some 300 workers, while, over 500 kilometres to the south, the super-province of Jirja was famous for its sugar.⁹ Meanwhile, sugar for the Ottoman imperial palace was milled in the Delta sub-provinces of Gharbiyya and Minūfiyya, as well as in Giza, just south of Cairo (Shaw 1962, 273). This last point may be key to understanding this document.

⁸ Ashtor (1977, 229–48, 258); Sato (2014, 25–30, 58–59).

⁹ Evliyā (*Seyāhatnāme*, 76, 80, 197, 204, 223, 242, 270, 332, 393, 402, 409); Shaw (1962, 119, 141, 273–74, 334).

1.1. The Court

The document comes from the *sharīʿa* court at Bāb al-Kharq/Bāb al-Saʿāda, located west of Bāb Zuwayla, the southern gate of the original Fatimid city of Cairo.¹⁰ Judges from at least three of the four Sunni rites—Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Ḥanbalī—heard cases at this location.¹¹ The judge hearing our case is named Aḥmad. He appears to be identical to Aḥmad Ḥusām, who rendered a judgement in the same court some three months earlier confirming the right of Cairo’s Rabbanite Jewish community to the historic Basātīn Cemetery on Cairo’s southeastern outskirts, where many Ottoman-era Genizah documents were buried (Davies 2019–20). By the seventeenth century, Cairo’s Jewish community was concentrated in Ḥārat Zuwayla. Though the neighbourhood, which was not connected to Bāb Zuwayla, lay over a kilometre north of Bāb al-Saʿāda, this particular *sharīʿa* court was probably the most convenient location when community members wished to approach a Muslim court. This particular judge was likewise accustomed to adjudicating cases involving Jewish claimants.

1.2. Format

In overall format, the document’s recto resembles the 945 AH/1538 CE debt-repayment case from Damietta (Ch. 1, Doc. 1),

¹⁰ Bāb al-Kharq was located roughly 500 metres directly west of Bāb Zuwayla while Bāb al-Saʿāda was apparently more or less synonymous with Ḍarb al-Saʿāda or Ḍarb Saʿāda, a street just to the north of Bāb al-Kharq.

¹¹ NLI Ms. Ar. 276.10 (Mālikī), NLI Ms. Ar. 276.15 (Ḥanafī), NLI Ms. Ar. 276.29 (Ḥanbalī and Mālikī), NLI Ms. Ar. 276.46 (Ḥanbalī).

although it is written in a far clearer hand, and the elaborate ‘*alāma*, the pious phrase serving as the judge’s ‘signature’, is replaced by the formula *الامر كما ذكره فيه*, followed by a self-deprecating reference to the judge himself as in need of God’s mercy. (Similar phrases open the case transcribed by Davies and others preserved in the National Library of Israel under MS Ar. 276.) The text on the right-hand side of the document’s recto, perpendicular to the main text, consists of a single line and is, moreover, a direct continuation of the bottom line of the main text, proceeding to a corroboration of the judge’s ruling and the affirmation of the parties involved. Below this text is an orderly row of seven hard-to-decipher witness signatures. The document’s verso attests to the payment of the tax farmer’s debt.

1.3. Yūsuf the Mūteferriḳa Officer

The two parties to this case are members of Ottoman Egypt’s power elite. The sugar-seller, Yūsuf, is the son of Meḥmed, the former *kāshif*, or administrator, of Gharbiyya sub-province in the western Nile Delta. The father had apparently managed to enrol his son in Egypt’s Mūteferriḳa corps, a combined cavalry and infantry regiment that was close to the Ottoman governor of Egypt; its ranks were filled by the sons of influential Ottoman officials. By the seventeenth century, it was the best-paid of Egypt’s seven regiments of soldiery and second in size only to the Janissaries. Its officers were, furthermore, the chief candidates for promotion to *sanjāk beyi*.¹² Yūsuf presumably continued on the Mūteferriḳa

¹² Shaw (1962, 192–94); Hathaway (1997b, 37–38; 2022a, 114–15).

payroll even though he had left active duty. Alternatively, his presence on the Mūteferriḳa rolls may be a form of fiscal fiction: his father may have enrolled him solely to guarantee him a steady income—a strategy that apparently did not work out as well as he expected.

Yūsuf also holds the tax farm of half the village of Saḩ Abī Turāb (today Ṣaḩ Turāb) in Gharbiyya, located to the southwest of the sub-provincial seat, al-Maḩalla al-Kubrā. (It was not unusual for villages and districts to be divided up in this manner for the purpose of revenue collection rights.¹³) The village boasted a sugar mill and, in fact, was located in one of the Egyptian sub-provinces that produced sugar for the palace. Sugar constituted the tax obligation of the tax farmers of such sugar villages; they were allowed to sell the excess (Shaw 1962, 74). Yūsuf had apparently intended to sell part of his excess sugar to the governor's Jewish banker to pay off his debt.

This Yūsuf may be identical to a grandee known as Yūsuf Bey bi-ḩarb al-Jamāmiz, so-called after the location of his residence in Cairo's ḩarb al-Jamāmiz (lit., 'Lane of the Plane Trees') quarter, southwest of Bāb Zuwayla and just west of Birkat al-Fīl, which at the time was the hub of elite residence in Cairo (Raymond 1963, 66, 75–78). An anonymous chronicle completed at the beginning of the eighteenth century notes, on the occasion of Yūsuf's being named *qā'im maqām*, or stand-in for a deposed governor, in 1066 AH/1656 CE, that he had previously been *kātib*, or scribe, of Egypt's Mūteferriḳa regiment and *kethūdā*, or deputy

¹³ Michel (2019, 131, 233 [and n. 167], 235–36, 285–86, 291–92, 338, 418, 420).

commander, of the Çavuşān regiment. The latter position was especially close to Egypt's governor.¹⁴ He belonged to the Faqārī faction and died in 1077 AH/1667 CE.

1.4. Mu'allim Mašliḥ

According to the court record, Yūsuf has sold a large quantity (130 *qintārs*) of sugar to the Jewish *mu'allim* Mašliḥ (the Arabic form of Matsli'aḥ, מצליח) son of 'Binyāmīl' (presumably really Binyāmīn), the *ṣarrāf*, or banker, to the *dīwān al-ʿālī*, referring to the governor's council. In addition to this position, Mašliḥ is in the service of the current *kāshif* of Gharbiyya, meaning the successor to Yūsuf's father, who would also be Yūsuf's superior in Gharbiyya. He is also a client (*tābiʿ*) of Mu'allim Ibrāhīm, another of the governor's *ṣarrāfs*. Thus Mašliḥ would seem to have considerable leverage over Yūsuf through his ties to the Ottoman governor of Egypt and to this other *ṣarrāf*, as well as to the current governor of the sub-province where Yūsuf administers a tax farm. Overall, the circumstances to which the document alludes point to close ties between Yūsuf and the Ottoman governor's circle, as well as connections to the process by which the imperial palace received sugar from Egypt.

Mašliḥ's sugar purchase seems to extend over three fiscal years: our document notes that he has purchased sugar 'from what was turned back in...1058 (1648)', but that his sugar was actually milled in 1059 AH/1649 CE and that Yūsuf agrees to deliver it to him in early 1060 AH/1650 CE. This rather confusing

¹⁴ *Zubdat*, fol. 10a; Holt (1961, 248); Shaw (1962, 194–96); Hathaway (1997b, 37–38).

verbiage could indicate that Maşliḥ was lending Yūsuf money against the surplus sugar left over after the palace received its supply each year, and possibly that he served as Yūsuf's personal banker/money-lender. This could also explain why Yūsuf's overall debt to Maşliḥ is far greater than the value of the 130 *qinṭārs* that he agrees to deliver in 1060 AH/1650 CE.

1.5. Yūsuf's Obligations

Maşliḥ, the document explains, is awaiting delivery of the sugar, which Yūsuf agrees to undertake over three months at the beginning of the *hijrī* year 1050. This sugar, it appears, constitutes partial repayment for a loan of 20,115 *nişf fiḍḍa* (the Mamluk-era silver coin used in Ottoman Egypt) that Yūsuf has received from Maşliḥ. Since the sugar is worth 15,600 *nişfs*, Maşliḥ also expects Yūsuf to pay him the remaining 4,515 *nişfs* of the loan in cash.

At the end of the document's recto, the judge introduces two additional circumstances. First, Yūsuf has obtained from Maşliḥ a separate loan of 9,000 *nişfs* that Maşliḥ has transferred to the *qāḍī* Aḥmad ibn Ḥijāzī, who is not present at the initial hearing but witnesses the repayment described on the verso, which includes remittance of the equivalent of 9,000 *nişfs* in sugar (see below). Second, Yūsuf cannot claim from Maşliḥ his 1048 AH/1648 CE Mütferriḳa stipend: at eight *‘uthmānīs*, a.k.a. *akçes*, per day—the *akçe* being the silver coin used in the Ottoman central lands—this would total just short of 3,000 *akçes* per year, or 1,200 *nişf fiḍḍas* at the 1600 exchange rate (Pamuk 2000, 94). The document's wording, 'from the obligation (*wājib*) for 1058', gives the impression that Yūsuf's salary, too, came from

proceeds from the sale of surplus sugar, although we cannot be sure.

1.6. The Repayment Scheme

On the document's verso is a *faṣl* that attests to repayment of the loan to Mu'allim Mašliḥ. Repayment, however, is not a simple matter of Yūsuf delivering the 130 *qintārs* of sugar to Mašliḥ, along with the 4,515 *nişfs*. Instead, it involves contributions from three different pairs of grandees, all of whom are connected to sugar production and, at least indirectly, to the supply of sugar to the Ottoman palace.

1.6.1. Siyāvūsh and Qayṭās

The first pair comprises Siyāvūsh, the former *kāshif* of Bahnasāwiyya, or al-Baḥnasā, sub-province in Upper Egypt, and Qayṭās Çavuş, probably a Janissary officer; the two of them pay the 4,515 *nişf fidḍa* that Yūsuf owes to Mašliḥ. Siyāvūsh and Qayṭās may be the same figures whom the chronicler al-Ḥallāq (*Tārīḥ-i Mıṣr-ı Kāhire*, fols 142a, 146b, 149b, 150a) identifies as clients of, respectively, the Qāsimī chieftain Qanşūh Bey and the long-time Faqārī pilgrimage commander Rıdvān Bey. Both were Janissary officers and, in the late 1640s, they were rival candidates for *şubaşı* (lit., 'head of the water'), a position equivalent to chief of police of Cairo. Al-Ḥallāq consistently refers to Qayṭās as 'Deli', or 'crazy', Qayṭās. Over 20 years later, the Ottoman traveller Evliyā Çelebi (*Seyāhatnāme*, 338, 378–79, 398) notes villages belonging to the tax farms of Siyāvūsh and Qayṭās Aghas in the Nile Delta sub-provinces of Gharbiyya and Minūfiyya—two

of the sub-provinces that produced the palace's sugar—along with neighbouring Buḥayra. These are certainly the same grantees, though Qayṭās now holds a higher military rank. (At the time of Evliyā's Egyptian sojourn, in fact, Qayṭās oversaw a village in Buḥayra that boasted a sugar factory near fields of sugarcane.) Siyāvūsh, Evliyā tells us, is Georgian, Qayṭās Circassian (Evliyā, *Seyāḥatnāme*, 338, 342, 536); this means that both originated as *mamlūks* from the Caucasus (Hathaway 1997b, 44, 46, 101–6; 2018b). Since they represent rival factions, they are presumably not partners in any fashion.

1.6.2. Özbek Bey and the *Vekīl Ḥarç*

The next legible pairing consists of the *amīr* Yazbak, a tax farmer in the sugar-producing sub-province of Minūfiyya, and Shaykh Muḥammad al-Maṣrī. The latter may be a Bedouin leader. The former is quite probably Azbak, or Özbek, Bey, the son of the great Qāsimī chieftain Rıdḫvān Bey Abī'l-Shawārib (not to be confused with Rıdḫvān Bey al-Faqārī, Qayṭās' patron). Özbek, who was promoted to *sanjāk beyi* in 1056 AH/1646 CE (al-Ḥallāq, *Tārīḫ-i Mısr-ı Kāhire*, fol. 153b; *Zubdat*, fol. 8b), was well-known to Evliyā Çelebi and held a number of influential positions in Egypt, including pilgrimage commander (*amīr al-ḥajj*) and governor of the Upper Egyptian super-province of Jirja, over the course of his career, which lasted from the 1640s through the end of the seventeenth century.¹⁵ Together, these two supply 110 *qinṭārs* of

¹⁵ Evliyā (*Seyāḥatnāme*, 87, 107, 188, 281–2, 402, 403, 422, 503, 520); Holt (1961, 241); Hathaway (2003, 152, 163–64; 2007, 99, 110; 2018a, 209).

the sugar that Yūsuf owes to Mašliḥ, leaving the remaining 20 to come from Saft Abī Turāb, meaning, presumably, that the mill that Yūsuf oversaw produced it.

Özbek also undertakes to remit seventy *qinṭārs* of sugar, the equivalent of 8,400 of the 9,000-*niṣf* debt that Yūsuf owes to Mašliḥ (calculating 120 *niṣfs* per *qinṭār*, as specified on the recto). The remaining five *qinṭārs*/600 *niṣfs* is covered by the third pair of grandees, Muṣṭafā the *wakīl al-khāraj* and al-Ḥājj ‘Umar al-Ḥawālī. The *wakīl al-khāraj* or, in Ottoman Turkish, *vekīl ḥarç*, was the imperial official who oversaw the supply of sugar, rice, and other luxury commodities from Egypt to the palace. He was always a former member of Egypt’s Çavuşān regiment, another mixed cavalry and infantry regiment close to the Ottoman governor (Shaw 1962, 195). One of his subordinates collected these supplies from all over the province, stored them in a warehouse in Rosetta, then shipped them to Istanbul. Sugar in excess of the palace’s requirements was sold, with profits going to the imperial treasury (Evliyā, *Seyāḥatnāme*, 197; Shaw 1962, 176, 272–74).¹⁶ ‘Umar al-Ḥawālī, for his part, is probably the *ḥawālī*, or *ḥavāle*, agha, an agent of the Egyptian governor—and always a former member of the Mütferriḳa regiment—who oversaw port customs operations and the collection of rural taxes (Shaw 1962, 88, 103–4, 132, 193). This duo’s participation in the repayment scheme must mean that they are sending Yūsuf part of the excess of the sugar that they have collected for the palace. Özbek Bey and

¹⁶ The office was abolished in 1133 AH/1720–21 CE and its duties combined with those of Egypt’s *defterdār*; see Shaw (1962, 148, 185, 273, 276).

Muḥammad al-Maṣrī may be doing the same thing. This interpretation seems logical: In the course of collecting the palace's sugar in the two Delta sub-provinces that produced most of it, these four officials come together to extract the amount necessary to cover Yūsuf's debt to one of the governor's *ṣarrāfs*. Or, perhaps more likely, the *vekīl ḥarç* orders the tax farmer and the Bedouin shaykh to provide as much of the necessary sugar as they can, joining the *ḥavāle* agha in making up the remainder from their own supply.

In the end, in any case, Özbek Bey pays the lion's share of Yūsuf's debt, although he does so entirely in sugar—demonstrating, incidentally, that sugar could be used as a cash equivalent in seventeenth-century Egypt. At the time, Özbek was not yet the dominant grandee whom Evliyā Çelebi would encounter some two decades later. Instead, he was a new *sanjāk beyi* who was building his career in the expectation of succeeding his father as leader of the Qāsimī faction following the execution of two preceding factional heads—one of them Siyāvūsh's patron Qanṣūh Bey—in 1057 AH/1647 CE.¹⁷ Like Yūsuf, Özbek was the son of an influential grandee, but he was farther along in his career and, on the evidence of this document, quite successful at tax-farming and sugar-provisioning—qualities that made him indispensable to the *vekīl ḥarç*, the governor of Egypt, and, ultimately, the palace. These qualities may likewise explain why he was appointed to deliver Egypt's annual tribute to Istanbul in 1058 AH/1648 CE (al-Ḥallāq, *Tārīḥ-i Mıṣr-ı Kāhire*, fol. 154a).

¹⁷ Holt (1966, 81); Hathaway (2003, 88–89, 151–52, 163–64, 166).

In sum, tax farmers and sugar producers from both factions were mobilised to pay this debt, although a future Qāsimī leader paid most of the debt of a Faqārī stalwart. Presumably the solvency of the governor's banker and the palace's sugar supply transcended provincial factional divisions, which were, in any case, at a relatively early stage in 1649.

2.0. Text

Paper, some staining on the verso, right middle margin. 44.049 cm x 16.309 cm.

Recto

Heading

هو المنعم

‘*Alāma* of the judge Aḥmad

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| الامر كما ذكر فيه | 1 |
| احمد المولى خلافة محكمة | 2 |
| باب الخرق والسعادة | 3 |
| عفي عنه | 4 |

حرره الفقير اليه سبحانه

[illegible seal of Aḥmad]

Main Text

- 1 بالمحكمة الشرعية المطهرة المرضية بخط بابي سعادة والخرق بمصر المحروسة بين يدي متوليها سيدنا
- 2 ومولانا الحاكم الشرعي الذي سيوقع خطه الكريم اعلاه ادام الله تعالى فضله واعلاه واحسن اليه واسبغ نعمته عليه اتي
- 3 من فخر الاعيان المكرمين الجنب العالي الامير يوسف بن المرحوم الامير محمد كاشف ولاية الغربية والده
- 4 كان ومن امرا المتفرقة هو بمصر المحروسة والمتصرف بالنصف من كامل ناحية سفت ابي تراب بولاية الغربية الى
- 5 اعز الله جنابه اشترى المعلم مصلح ولد بنياميل اليهودي الربان الصراف هو هو[؟] بالديوان العالي و بخدمة
- 6 كاشف الغربية حالا والمعروف بتابع المعلم ابراهيم صراف بالديوان العالي بمصر بماله لنفسه من الامير يوسف
- 7 المشار اليه فباعه جميع مائة قنطار واحدة وثلاثون قنطارا من السكر الخام الطيب القايم في
- 8 اعماله السالم من عيب مثله ومن العيوب الشرعية بالوزن القوي عبرة كل قنطار منها مايتا رطل
- 9 ثثنان وخمسون رطلا بالوزن المصري المعتاد في مثل ذلك من ما حود سنة ثمان وخمسين والف

- 10 الخراجية المتحصل بدولاب ناحية سفت ابي تراب المذكورة في سنة تسع وخمسين بعد الالف
- 11 الخراجية المعلوم لهما شرعا اشترا صحيحا شرعيا صدر بينهما يوم تاريخه بايجاب وقبول عند عيان
- 12 على الوجه الشرعي بثمان جملته عن الماية قنطار وثلاثين قنطار المبتاعة المذكورة من الفضة
- 13 الانصاف العددية خمسة عشر الف نصف و ستمائة نصف فضة حسابا عن ثمن كل قنطار منها
- 14 مائة نصف واحدة وعشرون نصفاً فضة جميع الثمن المذكور على حكم الحلول برئت ذمة المعلم
- 15 مصلح المشتري المذكور اعلاه للامير يوسف البايع المشار اليه اعلاه من جميع الثمن المعين اعلاه البراة الشرعية
- 16 بمقتضى ان الامير يوسف المشار اليه قاصصه بذلك من اصل ما يستحقه المعلم مصلح المذكور بذمته
- 17 من الدين الشرعي وقدره من الفضية الانصاف العددية الموصوفة عشرون الف نصف ومائة نصف
- 18 واحدة وخمسة عشر نصفاً فضة عددية المقاصصة الشرعية بالطريق الشرعي وصار
- 19 المتأخر للمعلم مصلح المذكور بذمة الامير يوسف المشار اليه بعد المحاسبة بالمبلغ المقاصص به المذكور

- 20 من الفضة الموصوفة اربعة الاف نصف وخمسمائة نصف وخمسة عشر نصفاً
فضة عديدة يقوم له
- 21 بذلك جملة واحدة في غاية شوال المبارك سنة تاريخه ادناه القيام الشرعي ثم
اذن الامير
- 22 يوسف المشار اليه للمعلم مصلح المذكور ان يتسلم جميع المائة قنطار
وثلاثون قنطار السكر المبتاعة المذكورة
- 23 من دولاب الناحية المذكورة في ثلاثة اشهر اولها محرم وغايتها شهر ربيع
الاول سنة ستين والـف
- 24 اذا شرعياً مقبولا وتصادقا على ذلك وعلى الامير يوسف المشار اليه عهدة
تسليم المائة قنطارا
- 25 وثلاثين قنطار السكر المبتاعة المذكورة للمعلم مصلح المذكور او لمن يعين
من جانبه بتسلم ذلك من دولاب
- 26 الناحية المذكورة في الثلاثة اشهر المذكورة وعلى ان كل شي نقص عن ذلك
ولم يتسلم المعلم مصلح
- 27 المذكور في التاريخ المذكور فيقوم له الامير يوسف المذكور ثمن كل قنطار
ينقص من ذلك خمسة
- 28 قروش كبار ابكلب في التاريخ المذكور حسبما توافقا وتراضيا على ذلك
التصادق الشرعي ثم اقر
- 29 الامير يوسف المشار اليه وهو بمفرده فريق اول واقـر المعلم مصلح المذكور
وهو بمفرده فريق

- 30 ثان الافرار الشرعي ان كلا فريق من الفريقين المذكورين اعلاه لا يستحق ولا يستوجب قبل الفريق الاخر ولا
- 31 تحت يده ولا في عهده ولا في امانته بوجه من الوجوه ولا بطريق من الطرق الشرعية كلها حقا مطلقا
- 32 ولا استحقاقا ولا دعوى ولا طلبا بوجه ولا سبب ولا فضة ولا ذهبا ولا فلوسا ولا نحاسا ولا
- 33 قبضا ولا اقباضا ولا رجوعا بمقبوض ولا قرضا ولا اقتراضا ولا معاملة ولا استجرار ولا حسابا
- 34 ولا غلطا في حساب ولا دينا ولا عينا بمسطور ولا بحجة ولا بدفتر ولا بتذكرة ولا بوثيقة ولا بغير ذلك
- 35 ولا تحاوila ولا دعوى بذلك ولا بشي منه ولا قليلا ولا كثيرا ولا جليلا ولا سهوا ولا نسيانا ولا
- 36 ذهولا ولا جهالة ولا اغفالة ولا ضمانة وكفاله ولا حواله ولا صيرورة ولا قصيرا ولا علته ولا
- 37 متعة ولا يمينا بالله تعالى ولا شيا قل ولا جل ما سلف من الزمان والى تاريخه سوى علقه تسلم الماية قنطار
- 38 وثلاثين قنطار السكر المتباعة المذكورة وعلقه الاربعة الف نصف وخمسماية نصف وخمسة عشر نصف
- 39 الفضة المعينة اعلاه وعلقه التسعة الاف نصف الفضة المحتال بها المعلم مصلح المذكور على ذمة القاضي احمد

- 40 ابن حجازي الغايب عن هذا المجلس من قبل الامير يوسف المشار اليه بما
يزايد على ذلك ولاحق للامير يوسف
- 41 اليه قبل المعلم مصلح المذكور بسبب علوفته بدفتر المتفرقة ورجا [؟] في
كل يوم ثمان عثمانة عن واجب سنة ثمان

Right Margin, Perpendicular

وخمسين والـف بمقتضى وصول ذلك له منه بالطريق الشرعي وتصادقا على
ذلك كله تصادقا شرعيا وثبت الاشهاد بذلك لدي [؟] سيدنا الحاكم المشار
اليه بشهادة شهوده ثبوتا شرعيا وحكم بموجب الاقرار بعدم الاستحقاق حكما
صحيحا شرعيا تاما معتبرا مرضيا تحريرا في سابع شوال سنة تسع وخمسين
والـف

Witnesses, right to left

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| كاتب | 1 |
| المحكمة [؟] ... | 2 |
| شهد على الحاكم | 1 |
| احمد ابن ابراهيم عبد | 2 |
| ال... | 3 |

- 1 شهد على الحاكم
- 2 ابو قاسم
- 3 يوسف ابن ...
- 4 منصور

- 1 شهد على الحاكم
- 2 ...
- 3 محمد ابن احمد المكي [؟]
- 4 ابن محمد [؟]

[The following signature is struck through with cross-hatching.]

- 1 شهد على الحاكم
- 2 محفوظ
- 3 ابن مسعود [؟]
- 4 ...

- 1 شهد بذلك
- 2 محمد الانعما [؟]

شهد	1
على الحاكم	2
احمد ابن	3
...	4

Verso

First Statement

وصل	1
ليد المعلم مصلح اليهودي المذكور باطنه الاربع الاف نصف فضة وخمس ماية نصف فضة المكتتب	2
ذلك بباطن الحجة من يد الامير سياوش كاشف البهتساوية سابقا عن يد الامير قيطاس جاوش	3
الواضع اسمه فيه في ثالث عشر شهر صفر الجيد من شهور سنة ١٠٦٠ الهلالية	4

Right Column

نصفها	1
فضة عدد [ية]	2
الفي مياتي سبعة [و] خمسين	3
حضر ذلك وشهد به	4
به الامير قيطاس جاوش	5

6 المذکور اعلاه

7 وثبت عنده [؟] ...

8 وصح ...

[Line 8 is partially obscured by Qayṭās Çavuş's seal, which follows:]

9 ختم قیطاس جاوش

Left Column

1 فضة عدد [ية]

2 اربع [ة] الف خمسمائة خم [سة] عشر

3 حضر ذلك وشهد به

4 محفوظ ابن بدر الدين الواطاجي

Second Statement

1 وصل

2 عن ما هو مكتتب باطنه ليد المعلم مصلح اليهودي المذكور باطنه عن يد

الامير... اقباله [؟]

3 من يد كل [؟] منه [؟] في نواحي... من السكر الخام القايم في اعماله

4 قناطر قوية

5 مياة وثلاثين

Third Statement

Right Column

ما هو في ناحية	1
زاوية... بولاية المنوفية من يد الامير يازبك ملتزم نصف	2
الناحية المذكورة نيابة [؟] الشيخ محمد المصري بموجب ما له بيد المعلم	3
مصلح المذكور مورخ في ثاني عشر جمادة الثاني سنة ١٠٦٠	4
الهلالية	5
قناطر قوي	6
مياة عشر	7

Left Column

في ناحية	1
صفط تراب بولاية	2
الغربية ...	3
قناطر قوية	4
عشرين	5

Fourth Statement

Right Column

- 1 ما هو من اقراض المزبور
- 2 يدفع الامير يازبك للامير
- 3 يوسف جلبي المذكور باطنه
- 4 قناطر قوية
- 5 سبعين

Left Column

- 1 وما هو مشترك بين الامير
- 2 مصطفى وكيل الخرجة
- 3 والحاج عمر الحوالي
- 4 قناطر قوية
- 5 خمسة

Fifth Statement

- 1 وبموجب ذلك صار كل نهى فريق لا يستحق عند الآخر شيء قل ولا جل بحضور
- 2 ومن سيوضع خطه فيه تحريرا في ثامن عشر من شهر جمادة [ال] اخر سنة ١٠٦٠ الهلالية الحمد لله

Witnesses

Right

- | | |
|---|------------|
| 1 | شهد |
| 2 | احمد حجازي |
| 3 | الجوهري |

Left

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| 1 | حضر ذلك |
| 2 | وشهد به كاتبه |
| 3 | الفقيه محفوظ ابن |
| 4 | بدر الدين الواطاجه |

Upper Right, Perpendicular (Judeo-Arabic filing note)¹⁸

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1 | חוגת אלאמיר יוסף שלבי |
| 2 | מולאזם נחית צאפת אבו |
| 3 | טורב ען סוכר וגירו |

¹⁸ My sincere thanks to Alan Elbaum for transcribing this filing note.

3.0. Textual Notes

Recto

Main Text

3. الجنب العالي lit. ‘the high side’: This phrase appears as a similar honorific for an *amīr* in BL OR 5544.12, a Hebrew legal document from 1679 CE; in two Arabic documents that probably date from the Mamluk era, it refers to a *qāḍī* and a notable: T-S Ar. 39.119, T-S Ar. 41.67. See also the similar use of the unqualified جناب: Liebrez (2022, Letters 2–192 *passim*); and Textual Notes to Ch. 2, Doc. 1; and Ch. 3, Docs 1, 5, and 6.
4. ال: Here, the scribe apparently wrote ال, then crossed it out.
5. بنيامين ‘Binyāmīl’: This may be a scribal error for بنيامين ‘Binyāmīn’.
5. هو هو ‘he he’: The repetition here may reflect the scribe’s desire to differentiate Maṣliḥ from his father, Binyāmīn. He differentiates Yūsuf from his father in similar fashion: كاشف ولاية الغربية والده كان ‘kāshif of the sub-province of Gharbiyya—his father was’ (ll. 3–4) and ومن امرا المتفرقة هو ‘he is of the *amīrs* of the Mūteferriḳa, he [himself, not his father]’ (l. 4).
9. ثثنان وخمسون ‘fifty-two’: This is perhaps a scribal error for اثثنان وخمسون.
28. ابكلب قروش: This is an abbreviation of ابو كلب Abū Kalb, ‘bearing a dog’, referring to the Dutch thaler in use at the

time, popularly known as Abū Kalb *qurūsh* or *asadī* (lion) *qurūsh* because its obverse featured a lion that, to many people, resembled a dog. See Raymond (1973–74, I:20–21); Pamuk (2000, 99 and Illustration 23). قروش '*qurūsh*' is a variant spelling of غروش '*ghurūsh*' (cf. the discussion of Ch. 2, Doc. 5; Ch. 3, Doc. 6; Ch. 4, Doc. 4).

30. لا يستحق ولا يستوجب '[neither party] is entitled to or has a claim to': The next seven lines consist of legal verbiage conveying that one party has no claim in any conceivable scenario. The wording differs substantially from that in Ch. 1, Doc. 1. See Mallat (2007, 65).
41. عثمانية: The plural of عثماني ('*uthmānī*'), which here refers to the Ottoman *akçe*, the standard silver coin in which soldiers' salaries were paid.

Witnesses

Abū Qāsim Yūsuf ibn... منصور، محمد الانعما [؟]، احمد ابن... Qāsim Yūsuf ibn...Manṣūr, Muḥammad al-In'amā [?], Aḥmad ibn..., the third, sixth, and seventh witnesses: Abū Qāsim also signed NLI Ms. Ar. 276.35 (1075 AH/1665 CE); Muḥammad and Aḥmad also signed NLI Ms. Ar. 276.10 (1056 AH/1646 CE), while Aḥmad also signed NLI Ms. Ar. 276.24 (1080 AH/1669 CE).¹⁹

¹⁹ I am grateful to Alan Elbaum for alerting me to the NLI Ms. Ar. 276 documents.

Verso

First Statement

2. 4,500 *nişf fidḍa*: ‘الاربعة الاف نصف فضة وخمس مائة نصف فضة’ (4,515). The scribe may have confused the debt paid by Qayṭās and Siyāvūsh with half of the unrelated 9,000-*nişf* debt.

Right Column

1. نصفها ‘half of it’: Half of an amount owed, or of an agreed-upon price, was customarily specified in legal documents ‘to obviate error and discourage forgery’ (Little 1984, 276).
- 4–5. به به: The scribe apparently wrote به twice by mistake.

Left Column

2. اربعة الاف ‘4,000’: This is conventionally rendered اربع[ة] الف.
4. الواطاجي ‘al-Ūṭājī’: This is the Turkish word *odacı* ‘chamberlain’. Maḥfūz ibn Badr al-Dīn al-Ūṭājī is the judge’s scribe, identified in the final witness signature.

Second Statement

4. قناطر قوية lit., ‘strong *qinṭārs*’: These are the special *qinṭārs* described on the recto, main text ll. 8–9, whereby one *qinṭār* is equivalent to 252 *raṭls*; ordinarily, the ratio was 100 *raṭls* per *qinṭār*.

5. مائة وثلاثين '130 [*qinṭārs*]': This statement is a summary of the total 130-*qinṭār* payment, which is broken down in the following statements.

Third Statement

Left Column

2. صفت تراب the village Şaṭṭ Turāb: Here, it is spelled with a ص and without 'Abī', as in modern-day usage.

Fourth Statement

Right Column

3. يوسف جلبى 'Yūsuf Çelebi': It was common in Ottoman usage for the sons of grantees to be called *çelebi*, somewhat akin to 'esquire', before they rose to high military-administrative rank.

Witnesses

Right

- 2-3 احمد حجازي الجوهري 'Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Jawharī': This is the *qāḍī* Aḥmad ibn Ḥijāzī (recto, main text ll. 39-40), to whom Maṣliḥ had transferred the 9,000-*niṣf* debt.

4.0. Translation

Recto

Heading

He [God] is the benefactor.

‘*Alāma* of the judge Aḥmad

1. The matter is as it was recounted in it [the document]. The poor one in need of [God’s mercy], praise him, recorded it,
2. Aḥmad, the master, the deputy [judge]²⁰ of the court
3. of Bāb al-Kharq and [Bāb] al-Sa‘āda,
4. may he be forgiven.

[illegible seal of Aḥmad]

Main Text

1. In the pure, well-pleasing [to God]²¹ *sharī‘a* court in the neighbourhood of Bābs Sa‘āda and al-Kharq in well-protected Cairo, before its overseer, our lord
2. and master the legal judge who will affix his noble calligraphy above, may God the exalted prolong his virtue and

²⁰ For this meaning of خلافة, see Little (1984, 9). This presumably means that he was Ḥanbalī, Mālikī, or Shāfi‘ī.

²¹ See Qur’ān 89.28. My thanks to Alan Elbaum for this observation.

elevate him and be charitable to him and bestow his blessings on him.

3. One of the glory of the venerable *a'yān*, the exalted *amīr* Yūsuf, son of the late *amīr* Meḥmed, *kāshif* of the sub-province of Gharbiyya—that is, his father
4. was—and one of the *umarā'* of the Mütferriḳa—he himself is—in well-protected Cairo, and tax farmer of half of the district of Saṭṭ Abī Turāb in the sub-province of Gharbiyya,
5. may God strengthen his honour, came [to the court]. Mu'allim Maṣliḥ, son of Binyāmīl [sic] the Rabbanite Jew, he himself [i.e., Maṣliḥ] the *ṣarrāf* in the [governor's] high council, and in the service of
6. the current *kāshif* of Gharbiyya, and known as a follower of Mu'allim Ibrāhīm, the *ṣarrāf* of the [governor's] high council in Cairo, bought for himself with his own money from the aforementioned *amīr* Yūsuf,
7. and he [Yūsuf] sold to him, one hundred *qinṭārs* and thirty *qinṭārs* of quality unrefined sugar, located in
8. his districts, free from any physical [?] defects and from legal defects, by heavy [lit., 'strong'] weight whereby every *qinṭār* of it is [equivalent to] 252 *raṭls*
9. by Egyptian weight, as is customary in this sort of case, from what was turned back in the *kharājī* (tax) year 1058 [1648],
10. [but] obtained from the mill of the aforementioned district Saṭṭ Abī Turāb in the *kharājī* year 1059 [1649],

11. known to both of them legally, [in] a sound, legal purchase that occurred between them on this date, by obligation and acceptance on seeing it,
12. in a legal manner at a total price for the aforementioned purchased 130 *qinṭārs*, in enumerated *niṣf fiḍḍa*,
13. 15,000 *niṣfs* and 600 *niṣfs*, calculating a price of 120 *niṣfs* per *qinṭār* of it [the sugar]:²²
14. the total aforementioned price by right of dissolution. Mu'allim Maṣliḥ, the purchaser mentioned above, is released of obligation
15. to the *amīr* Yūsuf, the above-mentioned seller, for the total price specified above, [in] a legal release,
16. insofar as the aforementioned *amīr* Yūsuf has settled accounts with him in this matter according to what the aforementioned Mu'allim Maṣliḥ is owed
17. of the legal debt whose quantity is 20,115 in the enumerated *niṣf fiḍḍa* described,
18. in a legal settlement by a legal route.
19. The balance [due] to the aforementioned Mu'allim Maṣliḥ of the aforementioned *amīr* Yūsuf's debt, after accounting for the aforementioned settled-upon amount

²² 120 x 130 = 15,600.

20. of the described *fiḍḍa*, is 4,515 enumerated *niṣf fiḍḍa*.²³ He [Yūsuf] will repay that to him [Maṣliḥ]
21. in full at the end of Shawwāl of the year whose date is below, a legal payment. Then the aforementioned *amīr*
22. Yūsuf gave permission for the aforementioned Mu‘allim Maṣliḥ to receive all of the 130 *qinṭārs* of the aforementioned purchased sugar
23. from the mill of the aforementioned district over three months: the first is Muḥarram and the last is Rabī‘ al-Awwal, of the year 1060 [1650],
24. in a legal and accepted permission, and the two of them agreed to this. To the aforementioned *amīr* Yūsuf [falls] the responsibility of delivering the 130 *qinṭārs*
25. of the aforementioned purchased sugar to the aforementioned Mu‘allim Maṣliḥ or to whoever is designated from his [Maṣliḥ’s] side to receive it from the mill
26. of the aforementioned district over the aforementioned three months. As to anything missing from it that the aforementioned Mu‘allim Maṣliḥ does not receive
27. by the aforementioned date, the aforementioned *amīr* Yūsuf will pay to him the price of each *qinṭār* missing from that [total]: five

²³ 20,115 – 15,600 = 4,515. In other words, Yūsuf owes Maṣliḥ 4,515 over and above the price of the sugar.

28. large 'lion' *qurūsh* in total on the aforementioned date in accordance with that which they agreed upon and approved [in] a legal authorisation. Then
29. the aforementioned *amīr* Yūsuf, and he by himself is the first party, acknowledged; and the aforementioned Mu'al-lim Maşliḥ, and he by himself is the second party, acknowledged
30. the legal acknowledgement. Neither one of the two parties mentioned above is entitled to or has a claim to, as against the other party, not
31. in his power or in his custody or in his safekeeping, not in any manner or by any legal means whatever: he absolutely has no right
32. and no entitlement and no claim and no demand from any standpoint, not in any way or fashion, not in silver, gold, small coins, or copper, not by
33. seizure or confiscation, not by repaying revenue, not loaned, not borrowed, not by transaction or instalment [purchase], not by account,
34. not by accounting error, not by debt or by sight of a dictate, not by decree or register or license or document or anything else,
35. not by a bill of exchange, not by taking legal action for it, not by any of these means, not little, not much, not great, not through inattention, not through forgetfulness, not

36. absent-mindedly, not [through] ignorance and not [through] neglect, not by guarantee or collateral, not by bill of exchange, not by the process of becoming, not of short duration, not on a pretext, not
37. through advantages, not by swearing by God the exalted, none of it, not little nor much, from olden times to the present day, except for the obligation of receipt of the aforementioned 130 *qinṭārs*
38. of purchased sugar and the obligation of the 4,515 *niṣf*
39. *fiḍḍa* specified above, and the obligation of the 9,000 *niṣf* *fiḍḍa* that the aforementioned Mu'allim Maṣliḥ transferred to the debt of the judge Aḥmad
40. ibn Ḥijāzī, absent from this session, against the aforementioned *amīr* Yūsuf, in addition to that. The aforementioned *amīr* Yūsuf has no right
41. against the aforementioned Mu'allim Maṣliḥ in regard to his salary in the register of the Müteferriḳa: he requested [?] eight *ʿuthmānis* a day from the obligation for the year

Right Margin, Perpendicular

1058 [1648], with the requirement that it arrives to him [Yūsuf] from him [Maṣliḥ] by legal means. The two of them authenticated all of this in a legal authentication. The certification corroborated this before our lord the aforementioned judge with the testimony of witnesses in a legal corroboration, and he ruled in accordance with the requirements of the settlement, in the absence of a claim, a sound,

legal, complete, considered, pleasing [judgement], recorded on 7 Shawwāl 1059 [14 October 1649].

Witnesses, right to left:

- 1st The scribe of the court [?] ...
- 2nd Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm ‘Abd al- ... bore witness to the judge.
- 3rd Abū Qāsim Yūsuf ibn ... Maṣṣūr bore witness to the judge.
- 4th ... Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Makkī [?] ibn Muḥammad [?]
bore witness to the judge.

[The following signature is struck through with cross-hatching.]

- 5th Maḥfuz ibn Mas‘ūd [?] ... bore witness to the judge.
- 6th Muḥammad al-Ina‘mā [?] witnessed this.
- 7th Aḥmad ibn ... bore witness to the judge.

Verso

First Statement

1. Delivered
2. to the hand of Mu‘allim Maṣliḥ the Jew, mentioned on the recto, 4,000 *niṣf fiḍḍa* and 500 *niṣf fiḍḍa* as stipulated
3. on the recto of the document, from the hand of the *amīr* Siyāvūsh, formerly the *kāshif* of al-Bahnasāwiyya, by way of the *amīr* Qayṭās Çavuş,
4. who put his name on it on the 13th of the month of Şafar the Good of the lunar year 1060 [14 February 1650].

Right Column

1. Half of it,
2. enumerated *fiḍḍa*:
3. 2,257.
- 4–6. The *amīr* Qayṭās Çavuş, mentioned above, was present and witnessed this,
7. and verified ...
8. and sound ... [line partially obscured by Qayṭās Çāvūş's seal, which follows:]
9. The seal of Qayṭās Çavuş

Left Column

1. Enumerated *fiḍḍa*:
2. 4,515.
- 3–4. Maḥfūz ibn Badr al-Dīn the *odacı* (chamberlain) was present and witnessed this.

Second Statement

1. Delivered
2. from what was specified on the recto, to the hand of Mu'alim Maşliḥ the Jew, mentioned on the recto, from the hand of the *amīr* ...,
3. from the hand of all of them [?] in the districts of ..., of the refined sugar located in his districts,

4. heavy *qinṭārs*:

5. 130.

Third Statement

Right Column

1. What is [i.e., the amount] in the district of

2. Zāwiyat ... in the sub-province of Minūfiyya²⁴ from the hand of the *amīr* Yazbak, the tax farmer of half

3. of the aforementioned district, represented by [?] ²⁵ Shaykh Muḥammad al-Maṣrī, by virtue of his property available to the aforementioned Mu'allim

4–5. Maṣliḥ, dated 12 Jumādā al-Thāni of the lunar year 1060 [11 June 1650],

6. heavy *qinṭārs*:

7. 110.

²⁴ Toussoun (1928 and 1936) lists five villages in Minūfiyya with the prefix Zāwiya, indicating a Sufi lodge: Zāwiyat al-Bakli (1928, 405; 1936, 485), Zāwiyat Bimam (1928, 405; 1936, 494), Zāwiyat Garawān (1928, 401; 1936, 491), Zāwiyat al-Naoūra (1928, 403; 1936, 485), and Zāwiyat Razīn (1928, 401; 1936, 483).

²⁵ Meaning, perhaps, that Yazbak/Özbek is not physically present in the district, and Shaykh Muḥammad handles daily affairs.

Left Column

1. In the district of
2. Şaḡ Turāb in the sub-province
3. of Gharbiyya ...,
4. heavy *qinṭārs*:
5. 20.

Fourth Statement

Right Column

1. What remains of the aforementioned loan
2. the *amīr* Yazbak will pay to the *amīr*
3. Yūsuf Çelebi, mentioned on the recto,
4. heavy *qinṭārs*:
5. 70.

Left Column

1. What is split between the *amīr*
2. Muṣṭafā the *wakīl al-khāraj*
3. and al-Ḥājj ʿUmar the *ḥawālī* [agha],
4. heavy *qinṭārs*:
5. five.

Fifth Statement

1. By virtue of that, everything was ended. [Neither] party is entitled to anything from the other, not little and not much, by those present
2. and those who will affix their script to [the document], registered on 18 Jumādā [al-]Ākhir of the lunar year 1060 [21 June 1650], praise God.

Witnesses

Right

Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Jawharī witnessed [this].

Left

His [the judge Aḥmad's] scribe, the poor one Maḥfuḏ ibn Badr al-Dīn the *odacı* (chamberlain), attended this [session] and witnessed it.

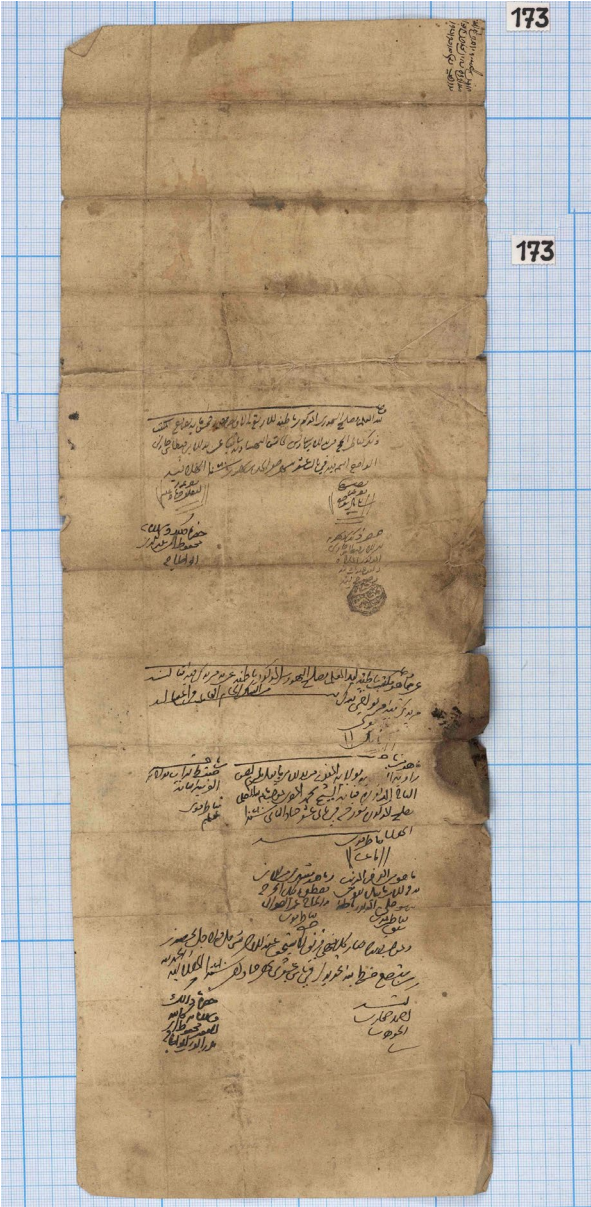
Upper Right, Perpendicular (Judeo–Arabic filing note)

1. The document of the *amīr* Yūsuf Çelebi,
2. administrator of the district of Şaḡ Abū
3. Turāb, for sugar and other things.

Plate XX: AIU XII.173, recto. Collection of Cairo Genizah fragments belonging to the Consistoire central de Paris, on deposit at the Library of the Alliance israélite universelle.



Plate XXI : AIU XII.173, verso. Collection of Cairo Genizah fragments belonging to the Consistoire central de Paris, on deposit at the Library of the Alliance israélite universelle.



DOCUMENT 5: AIU XII.86

GUM ARABIC AND CORAL FROM MU‘ALLIM IBRĀHĪM, 1802

1.0. Discussion

1.1. The Merchants

AIU XII.86 is a business letter, dated Sha‘bān 1217 AH/December 1802 CE, to the Jewish coral merchant Mu‘allim Ibrāhīm ‘Ādāh, who appears to be quite a prominent member of Cairo’s Jewish community. Like Salmūn Iskandarānī in Ch. 2, Docs 1–3, he seems to have clients (Arabic singular, *tābi‘*) working with him in Cairo, in addition to partners and associates in various places. In addition to nameless ‘clients’, the letter-writers note Mu‘allim Bakhūr, apparently Ibrāhīm’s sometime agent, as well as two merchants, Ibrāhīm Tilki (?) and Mu‘allim Mushamshir (?), seemingly partners in Ibrāhīm’s commercial operations.

The writers are Yūsuf and Fransīs Zakkār (Zechariah), who could be either Jewish or Christian. A prominent Jewish overseas merchant known as Shim‘ūn Fransīs, along with his business partner, was active in the eastern Mediterranean at just this time (see the following document, AIU XII.87, and Ch. 4, Doc. 4). Mu‘allim Samuel and Hanā, whose greetings to Ibrāhīm appear in the letter’s margin, could also be Jewish or Christian; either way, they could be a merchant and his wife residing in the same town where Yūsuf and Fransīs are located.

1.2. Gum Arabic

Yūsuf and Fransīs are Ibrāhīm's business partners, travelling to sell goods. At the time of writing, they are in an unspecified location, trying to sell gum arabic, a gum derived from the sap of acacia trees, that Ibrāhīm has shipped to them from his base in Cairo, packed in baskets. Today, gum arabic is used most extensively in the food and beverage industry as a thickening agent, an emulsifier, or a stabiliser (Idris 2015). In the early modern era, it was integral to the textile industry as a thickening agent for dyes and a stiffener for printed cloth (Webb 1985; Wimmeler 2019). It was also used to stiffen paper, to thicken inks and paints, and as an adhesive.

Even today, the overwhelming majority of gum arabic comes from Sudan, so it is hardly surprising that the gum arabic described in this letter is from Sennār, a city in southeastern Sudan that, at the time of writing, was the capital of the Funj Sultanate. A population of rather mysterious origin from the far south of Sudan, the Funj migrated northward in the late fifteenth century, conquering rival populations until they controlled most of Sudan by 1501. For the next 320 years, they ruled the region from Sennār, although the authority of the ruling dynasty had passed to a dynasty of regents by the mid-eighteenth century.²⁶ The sultanate traded chiefly in slaves, acquired from regions under Funj control or trans-shipped from neighbouring kingdoms. Every year, Cairo received a 'Sennār caravan'—actually several

²⁶ *Funj Chronicles* (4, 19, 34, 72–73, 76, 155, 163 n. 13, 184–85); Holt and Daly (2000, 24–29, 31–35).

regional caravans that converged at Sennār—carrying several hundred enslaved people from throughout the region (Hathaway 2018a, 29–30). Yet these caravans carried other items, as well, including gum arabic. The western Sudanese province of Kordofan, a key source of slaves, was also home to a critical mass of *acacia senegal* trees, one of two species that yield gum arabic (LaRue 2009; Idris 2015). Mu‘allim Ibrāhīm may have acquired his supply when the Sennār caravans reached Cairo.

1.3. Coral

Ibrāhīm has sent this gum arabic to Yūsuf and Fransīs as compensation for a box of coral (or a coral box) that they had shipped to him earlier. In the medieval Genizah documents studied by Goitein, coral, almost always from the Mediterranean, was shaped into beads and crafted into jewellery or included in bridal trousseaus (Goitein 1967, 47, 99–100, 153, 154, 155, 177, 199, 334). During the Ottoman period, Sephardic Jews based in the Italian port of Livorno, near Florence, played a prominent role in shipping Mediterranean red coral to Asia (Trivellato 2009, 224–32), although our letter gives no indication of connections between Ibrāhīm and Livorno.²⁷ Here, in any case, the coral is

²⁷ The autobiography of the nineteenth-century traveller/adventurer Nicholas Said reports coral being shipped to Suez from Jidda and exported through Jidda to ‘Abyssinia and the interior [of Africa]’ (Said, *Autobiography*, 91).

shipped in a small vendor's box (Arabic singular, *ṣandūqa*), perhaps made of wood (see Textual Notes, below).²⁸

In short, Yūsuf and Fransīs, on one hand, and Ibrāhīm, on the other, have exchanged two very different types of goods from very different locales: gum arabic from Sudan, coral from the Mediterranean. Since Ibrāhīm has sent the gum arabic from Cairo, it stands to reason that his partners are writing from somewhere to the north, northeast, or west of Cairo. If they were in Upper Egypt, by contrast, it would make little sense for Ibrāhīm to send them gum arabic from Cairo since they would be much closer to the source of supply. A location on or near the Mediterranean, meanwhile, would put them close to the supply of coral; reefs were found off the coasts of Italy, Tunisia and Algeria, Spain, and southern France (Trivellato 2009, 226–29). The writers do mention a locale where the price of gum arabic has dropped, but I could not decipher the place name; in any case, it may not be close to their location, where the price has risen.

1.4. Plague

One way of pinpointing the travelling merchants' location would be to identify the outbreak of plague that their letter mentions. This is not as easy a task as might at first appear since bubonic plague and other deadly epidemic diseases broke out periodically in various parts of the Ottoman Empire from the fourteenth

²⁸ The expression *ṣandūqa marjān* could also refer to a box made of coral, although beads seem to have been by far the most common article made of coral during the Ottoman era, and they were commonly shipped in boxes; see Trivellato (2009, 226, 229, 239).

through the nineteenth centuries (Dols 1977; 1979; Varlık 2015). Michael Dols' analysis (1979, 176 [and nn. 29–30], 189) shows bubonic plague outbreaks in the opening years of the nineteenth century in both Lower and Upper Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Anatolia, the Ottoman Balkans, Tunisia, and Algeria, yet no outbreak in 1802 specifically. On the other hand, Egypt was ravaged by plague, spread by advancing French soldiers and fleeing refugees, during the Napoleonic occupation from 1798–1801, with a particularly severe outbreak in 1801 (Panzac 1985, 284, 327–33, 346–48, 383, 622, 626). Still, this outbreak of plague was over by December 1802. The Egyptian chronicler al-Jabartī, who was recording events in Cairo and Egypt at large at the time, does not mention a plague in the *hijrī* year 1217, except for a ship that arrived at Alexandria in Rabīʿ al-Awwal 1217/July 1802 with plague on board and that was therefore burned by the British naval authorities (al-Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-āthār*, III:276). Meanwhile, Nancy Gallagher's research on plague in Tunisia (1983, 30–31) shows no epidemic outbreaks between 1794 and 1818.

Nonetheless, Yūsuf and Fransīs may be stranded by plague in one of the Mediterranean port cities, through which plague, introduced by merchant ships, could readily circulate, sometimes without spreading beyond the port, as occurred in Alexandria in 1803 (Panzac 1985, 163; cf. 131–32, 141–53). It is even possible that their letter refers to the beginnings of Alexandria's outbreak that year. Alternatively, the letter-writers may actually be referring to a localised outbreak of some other disease, such as typhoid or an infectious gastrointestinal or bronchial illness, since

all sorts of contagious diseases could be subsumed under the rubric 'plague' (Arabic, *tā'ūn*) (Gallagher 1983, 5–6; Panzac 1985, 375–78).

2.0. Text

Paper, slight tearing at top and right side. 36.844 cm x 25.093 cm.

Recto

- 1 الى جناب حضرة محبنا العزيز الاكرم المعلم ابراهيم عاداه المكرم حفظه الله تعالى وابقاه
- 2 بعد وفور الشوق لحضرتكم بكل خير وعافية قباسة [؟] باس الاوقات وصلنا عزيز مكتوبكم
- 3 المحرر في ١٦ الماضي وحمدناه تعالى لتمام صحتكم المرغوبة ولا تواخذونا بعاقبة الجواب فهو
- 4 من اشتغال البال وتربيط الايدي في وجود التشويش الطاعون الذي تظاهر هنا
- 5 شي بغير وقته وراجيين من الله تعالى ارتفاعه بدخول الايام الباردة ولا يمتد لاکثر
- 6 ونرجوا منه تعالى الحماية ونسالكم الدعا وعدم المواخذة بعاقبة الجواب وقبول العذر
- 7 وقد صار معلومنا وصول كتابنا اليكم واحاطة فهمكم مطلوبنا بالباقي من ثمن
- 8 صندوق المرجان صمغ سناري فاخذتوه لنا وعبيتوه اربعة اقفاص وعلم

- 9 الوزن والثلثين والمصروف وصلنا مع الاربعة اقفاص الصمغ وقيدناهم لمحبتكم
- 10 قدامنا كونوا مصابقة ويشكر الله فضلكم وهمتكم وانما كنا نترجا يكون سعر
- 11 الصمغ فرط عنما اخذتوه لانه هنا انباع صمغ سناري طيب سعر ٢٣-٢٥ على ١٠٠...
- 12 والعيار ٦٠ ط كل قفص واسعاره بالبيكوريا [؟] هبطت بالمره وانباع هناك
سعر ٢٠
- 13 الله تعالى يعوض على الناس خير وصندوقه المرجان التي حضرت لنا الان هي
صغيرة
- 14 ومحزومة وعرفنا بسببكم المعلم بخور يخبركم عنها انكان تريدوا توكلوه ياخذها
- 15 لكم عرفونا والمادة [؟] قرية ما تحرز وربنا يجيب بخير واحوال طرفنا على
حالتها وما
- 16 نجد نعرفكم القصد اتصال علوم صحتكم شرفونا بخدمكم اهدوا سلامنا
ومزي
- 17 شوقنا لمحبتنا العزيز الخواجة ابراهيم تلكى [؟] والمعلم مشمشر [؟] والى
تابعكم.

Signature

- 1 لمحبتكم المحبين
- 2 يوسف وفرنسيس
- 3 زكار

Right Margin, Perpendicular

١٨ في شعبان سنة ١٢١٧

Right Margin, Upside-Down

1 المعلم شمويل وهنا المحبين يسلمون عليكم

2 والله تعالى يحفظهم وي...كم والسلام

Verso: Address

1 بمشيئته تعالى

2 يصل لمحروسة مصر يسلم ليد الاعز محبنا العزيز المعلم ابراهيم عاداه

3 المراجيني بالخير

3.0. Textual Notes

Recto

1. جناب lit., 'side': This is an honorific. See Liebreinz (2022, Letters 2–192 *passim*); and Textual Notes to Ch. 2, Doc. 1; and Ch. 3, Docs 1 and 6.

8, 13. صندوق 'box': صندوق is the generic word for 'box' whereas صندوقة refers to a vendor's box. The use of صندوقة in l. 13 makes it seem likely that this was the box in which the coral was shipped.

14. انكان 'if [you were wishing]' is conventionally written as two separate words, ان كان.

4.0. Translation

Recto

1. To his excellency, our dear friend, the most noble Mu'allim Ibrāhīm 'Ādāh the revered, may God the exalted preserve and keep him.
2. After [expressing] our copious longing for your excellency, with best wishes and fecund [?] health at all times: we have received your noble letter,
3. written on the 16th past, and we praise [Go]d the exalted for your complete good health. Don't blame us for the delay in replying, for
4. our minds have been preoccupied and our hands have been bound by the disorder: the plague that has appeared here,
5. an untimely thing, and we ask God the exalted to remove it with the coming of cold days, and that it may not last much longer.
6. We implore the protection of [Go]d the exalted and ask for your prayers, and that you not blame us for the delay in replying but accept our excuse.
7. We are apprised of your receipt of our letter informing you of our request for the remainder of the price
8. of the box of coral [payable in] Sennārī gum arabic. You got it for us and packed [it in] four baskets of known
9. weight and price and expenditure. We received the gum with the four baskets and registered them to your belovedness.

10. May we be face-to-face in affinity,²⁹ and God is thanked [for] your favour and your zeal. We were hoping that the price
11. for the gum would be more than what you got it for, because here, high-quality Sennārī gum has sold for a price of 23–25 per 100 ... [perhaps a unit of measure].
12. The standard measure is 60 [*qirā*]ṭs per basket, and prices have absolutely dropped in al-Bīkūrā [? a place name], whereas there, it is selling for a price of 20,
13. may God the exalted recompense the people with good. The [vendor's] box of coral³⁰ that we have just received is small
14. and wrapped up, and Mu'allim Bakhūr informed us, regarding you, that he will apprise you of it; if you wish [lit., 'if you were wishing'] to appoint him [as agent] to acquire it
15. for you, inform us. The material [?] is nearby; don't worry, and may our Lord respond with good. Our status³¹ is the same.
16. We can't stress enough our desire to know that you are in good health.³² Honour us with your service. Convey our greetings and our copious

²⁹ Literally, 'Be face-to-face in affinity'. This interpretation assumes that مصابقة acts as an adverb in the accusative case.

³⁰ As noted above, the expression could conceivably refer to a box made of coral, though this seems unlikely.

³¹ Literally, 'the condition of our side'.

³² Literally, 'We don't know how to tell you that our goal is the continuation of knowledge of your health'.

17. longing for our dear friend Khwāja Ibrāhīm Tilki³³ [?] and Mu‘allim Mushamshir [?] and to your client[s].

Signature

1. From your loving friends,
2. Yūsuf and Fransīs
3. Zakkār

Right Margin, Perpendicular

on 18 Sha‘ban 1217 [14 December 1802]

Right Margin, Upside-Down

1. Mu‘allim Samuel and Hanā, the friends, greet you,
2. May God the exalted preserve you and ... you, and peace.

Verso: Address

1. With the will of [Go]d the exalted,
2. may it arrive in Cairo the well-protected and be delivered soundly to the mighty hand of our dear friend Mu‘allim Ibrāhīm ‘Ādāh,
3. the coral merchant.

³³ *Tilki* means ‘fox’ in Turkish.

Plate XXIII: AIU XII.86, verso. Collection of Cairo Genizah fragments belonging to the Consistoire central de Paris, on deposit at the Library of the Alliance israélite universelle.



DOCUMENT 6: AIU XII.87

A LOAN FROM SAYYID MUḤAMMAD ḤASAN AL-‘AṬṬĀR, 1808

1.0. Discussion

This Genizah document is somewhat unusual because it is a letter, dated 1223 AH/1808 CE, from one Muslim to another. Moreover, writer and recipient share an occupational *laqab*: al-‘Aṭṭār, ‘the perfumer’ or ‘the druggist’. The recipient is Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥasan al-‘Aṭṭār, who, in addition to being a *sayyid*, or descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad, is a perfumer or druggist, as his *laqab* implies. His given names and occupational *laqab* are identical to those of the father of the polymath Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-‘Aṭṭār (1180–1250 AH/1766–1835 CE), who served as Shaykh al-Azhar, or rector of al-Azhar theological seminary, during the last five years of his life. Yet Ḥasan al-‘Aṭṭār was not a *sayyid*, and his father was probably deceased by 1808. Nonetheless, Sayyid Muḥammad may have been known to the future Shaykh al-Azhar: a 1225 AH/1811 CE letter of Ḥasan al-‘Aṭṭār to the *mufti* of Jerusalem, published by Butrus Abu-Manneh (2003, 89), sends greetings to Sayyid Muḥammad al-‘Aṭṭār, whom the letter describes as ‘seeking refuge with’ the *mufti*.

The writer of our letter is another ‘aṭṭār: al-Ḥājj Muḥammad ‘Ashrī al-‘Aṭṭār, who may be related to Sayyid Muḥammad or simply another druggist/perfumer or the descendant of one. He

writes regarding repayment of loans to Sayyid Muḥammad. Sayyid Muḥammad had made a loan of 12,000 *fiḍḍa*, a shorthand reference to the *niṣf fiḍḍa*, the standard Egyptian silver coin, to the Jewish merchant Mu‘allim Shim‘ūn Fransīs, an international trader who ran a Cairo-based commercial company with his partner, Mercado Karo.³⁴ Shim‘ūn and/or his company, Karo y Fransīs, is mentioned in some 87 Geniza documents ranging from the 1790s through 1829.³⁵ Sayyid Muḥammad had also made a separate loan of 5,800 *niṣf fiḍḍa* in ‘large silver *qurūsh*’ (*fiḍḍa qurūsh kibār*), probably a reference to the new silver *qurūsh* (*ghurūsh*) that was minted in Istanbul beginning in the 1690s.³⁶ Initially, Muḥammad ‘Ashrī had thought that both loans had been to Fransīs and that therefore Sayyid Muḥammad could simply collect the total amount and return Fransīs’ deposit, that is, the collateral that he had given Sayyid Muḥammad to secure the loan. The current letter reveals that Muḥammad ‘Ashrī had been

³⁴ This first name, Spanish for ‘bought’ or ‘market’, indicates that a child previously born to his parents had died. To ward off the angel of death, the parents symbolically ‘sold’ the new baby to another family, then ‘bought’ him back a few days later, calling him *mercado* or *mercado comprado* (‘market-bought’). See Ben Naeh (2014, section 1). My thanks to Dotan Arad for alerting me to this custom.

³⁵ The documents, almost all in Judeo–Arabic, some with an admixture of Ladino, can be identified by conducting a search for ‘Frances’ in the Princeton Geniza Project website, geniza.princeton.edu. The AIU.VII.E category contains the largest concentration.

³⁶ Raymond (1973–74, I:38–39); Pamuk (1994, 966–70; 2000, 159–60); discussion of Ch. 2, Doc. 5 and Ch. 4, Doc. 4.

mistaken: he himself had negotiated the 5,800-*fiḍḍa* loan, securing it with a deposit of obsolete coins: 100 Venetian gold ducats, or *bunduqīs* (recto l. 10), which had not been minted since Napoleon overthrew the Republic of Venice in 1797, and 100 Maria Theresa silver thalers—commonly, if illogically, known as *riyāl farānsa* ('real of France', recto l. 11) (Raymond 1973–74, I:25)—which ceased to be minted with Maria Theresa's death in 1780.

If Sayyid Muḥammad al-ʿAṭṭār were able to lend substantial sums to multiple merchants, including a prominent international trader such as Shimʿūn Fransīs, then he must have been quite well-off himself. On the other hand, we do not know how wide his circle of debtors was. He may have lent money to Shimʿūn Fransīs and Muḥammad ʿAshrī exclusively. Clearly Fransīs and ʿAshrī themselves were linked in some way, most probably through commercial dealings. Otherwise, Muḥammad al-ʿAshrī would presumably not have confused the loan that he had obtained from Sayyid Muḥammad with Fransīs' loan. If they habitually pooled their funds, then they may well have been business partners. Noteworthy, in any case, is the array of coinage types, of many provenances and eras, available for use in financial transactions in early nineteenth-century Egypt.

The letter's address, preserved on the document's verso, reveals that Sayyid Muḥammad al-ʿAṭṭār is headquartered in what the letter calls the *Bunduqāniyya* in Cairo. This is probably the quarter or street of the *Bunduqāniyyīn*, located just west of al-Azhar and slightly north of Bāb Zuwayla. ʿAlī Pasha Mubārak ([1239–1311 AH/1823–93 CE] *al-Khiṭaṭ al-tawfiqiyya*, III:33–34), drawing heavily on the topographical work of al-Maqrizī (*Khiṭaṭ*,

II:433–36, 605), points out that the street is so-called because under the Mamluk Sultanate, it was a commercial artery that featured workshops producing crossbows that shot *bunduqs*, or clay pellets. These weapons were quite popular among the Mamluk military elite (Zouache 2014–15, 316). During the eighteenth century, the *Bunduqāniyyīn* was home to a number of the tenement buildings, known in the Arabic singular as *rabʿ*, that were usually found in commercial zones (Raymond 1980b, 3). The *Bunduqāniyyīn*'s status as a major commercial hub easily explains Sayyid Muḥammad al-ʿAṭṭār's decision to operate there. Whether he resided in the same neighbourhood remains unknown.

2.0. Text

Paper, large stain in middle. 23.249 cm x 17.323 cm.

Recto

- | | |
|--|---|
| ملحق خير | 1 |
| سلام الله تعالى ورحمته وبركاته وازكى تحياته نخس بذلك | 2 |
| حضرة الجناب المكرم سيدي محمد حسن اعزه الله امين | 3 |
| بعد اهدا مزيد السلام عليه لا يخفا من تعرفكم ان سابق تاريخه | 4 |
| ارسلنا عرفناكم انكم تاخذ من المعلم شمعون فرنسيس | 5 |
| اثني عشر الف فضة وخمس الاف وثمان مائة فضة | 6 |
| قروش كبار ولاكان هذا غلط والصواب انكم تاخذو | 7 |
| من المذكور اثني عشر الف فضة وتعطيه الوداعة بتاعه | 8 |

- 9 وان الخمس الاف وثمان مائة الفضة القروش الكبار
- 10 في الوداعة بتاعنا الذي فيها الماية بندقي والماية
- 11 فرانسة يكون ذالك في شريف علمكم والسلام

Signature

- 1 الفقير الحاج
- 2 محمد عشري
- 3 العطار

Date

١٩ صفر سنة ١٢٢٣

Verso: Address

- 1 يصل الى مصر يسلم ليد سيدي
- 2 محمد حسن العطار بالبندقانية
- 3 في خير ٨٦٤٢

3.0. Textual Notes

Recto

2, 11. ذالك is an alternative spelling of ذلك.

3. جناب lit., ‘side’: This is an honorific. See Liebreinz (2022, Letters 2–192 *passim*); and Textual Notes to Ch. 2, Doc. 1; and Ch. 3, Docs 1 and 5.

- 7, 9. قروش ‘*qurūsh*’: Here, the name of this coin is spelled with an initial ق , as in Ch. 3, Doc. 4 (recto, l. 28), whereas in all other documents in which it appears, it is spelled with an initial غ .
7. ولاكن ‘but’: Here, the writer adds an additional *ālif* to ولاكن.
- 8, 10. الوداعة ‘the deposit’: This is a variant spelling of الوديعة.

Verso

3. ٨٦٤٢ ‘8642’: This sequence of numbers, which has talismanic significance, appears in a large number of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century letters and manuscripts from the Ottoman Arab lands; see Liebrecht (2022, 60–64).

4.0. Translation

Recto

1. A good supplement.³⁷
2. The peace of God the exalted and his mercy and blessings, and his most abundant greetings—with these we greet
3. his noble excellency Sayyidi Muḥammad Ḥasan, may God strengthen him. Amen.
4. After offering copious greetings to him—It is not hidden from you that before this date

³⁷ Presumably this is an addendum to the previous letter referenced in ll. 4–5.

5. we sent to inform you that you should take from Mu'allim Shim'un Fransīs
6. 12,000 *fiḍḍa* and 5,800 *fiḍḍa*
7. in large silver *qurūsh*, but this was an error. What is correct is that you should take
8. from the aforementioned [i.e., Shim'un Fransīs] the 12,000 *fiḍḍa* and give him the deposit belonging to him
9. and that the 5,800 large silver *qurūsh*
10. is in the deposit belonging to us, in which there are 100 *bunduqīs* and 100
11. *farānsa*. May you be informed of this [lit., 'may that be in your honourable knowledge']. And peace.

Signature

1. The poor one, al-Ḥājj
2. Muḥammad 'Ashrī
3. al-'Aṭṭār

Date

19 Ṣafar in the year 1223 [16 April 1808]

Verso: Address

1. May it arrive in Cairo and be delivered soundly to the hand of Sayyidi
2. Muḥammad Ḥasan al-'Aṭṭār in the Bunduqāniyya.
3. 8642

Plate XXIV: AIU XII.87, recto. Collection of Cairo Genizah fragments belonging to the Consistoire central de Paris, on deposit at the Library of the Alliance israélite universelle.

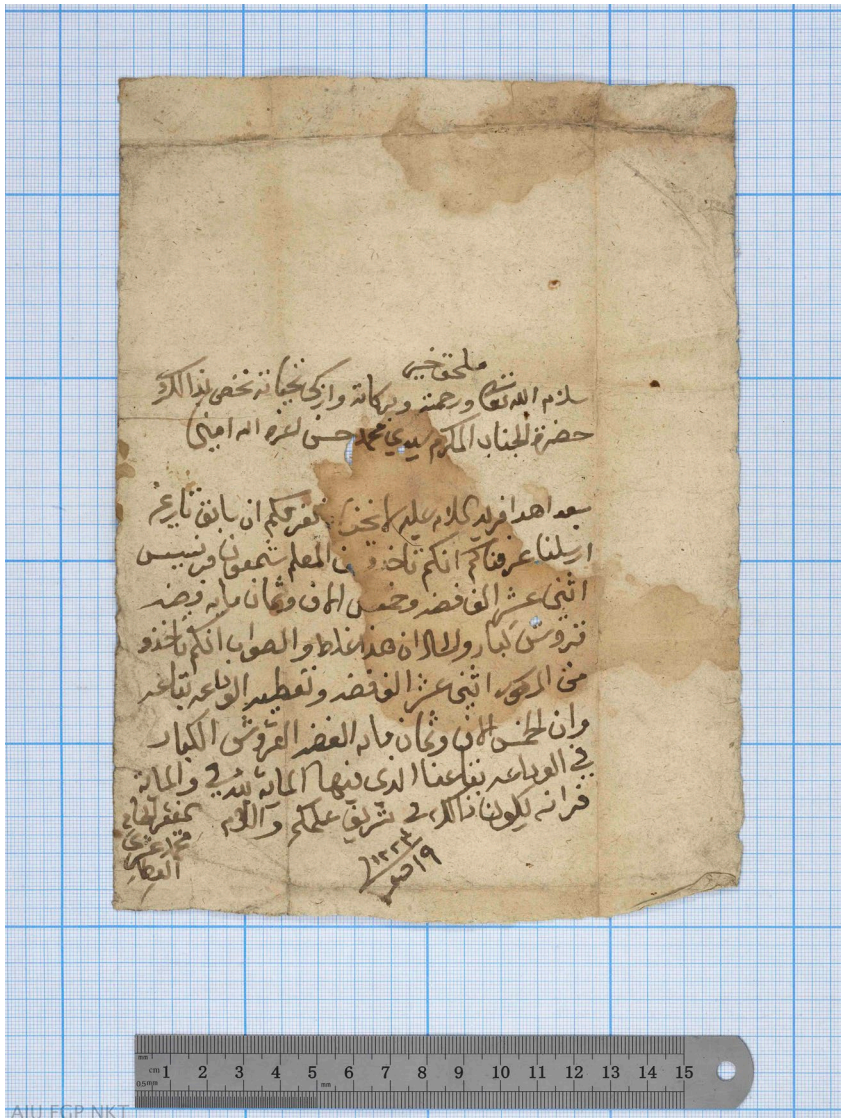
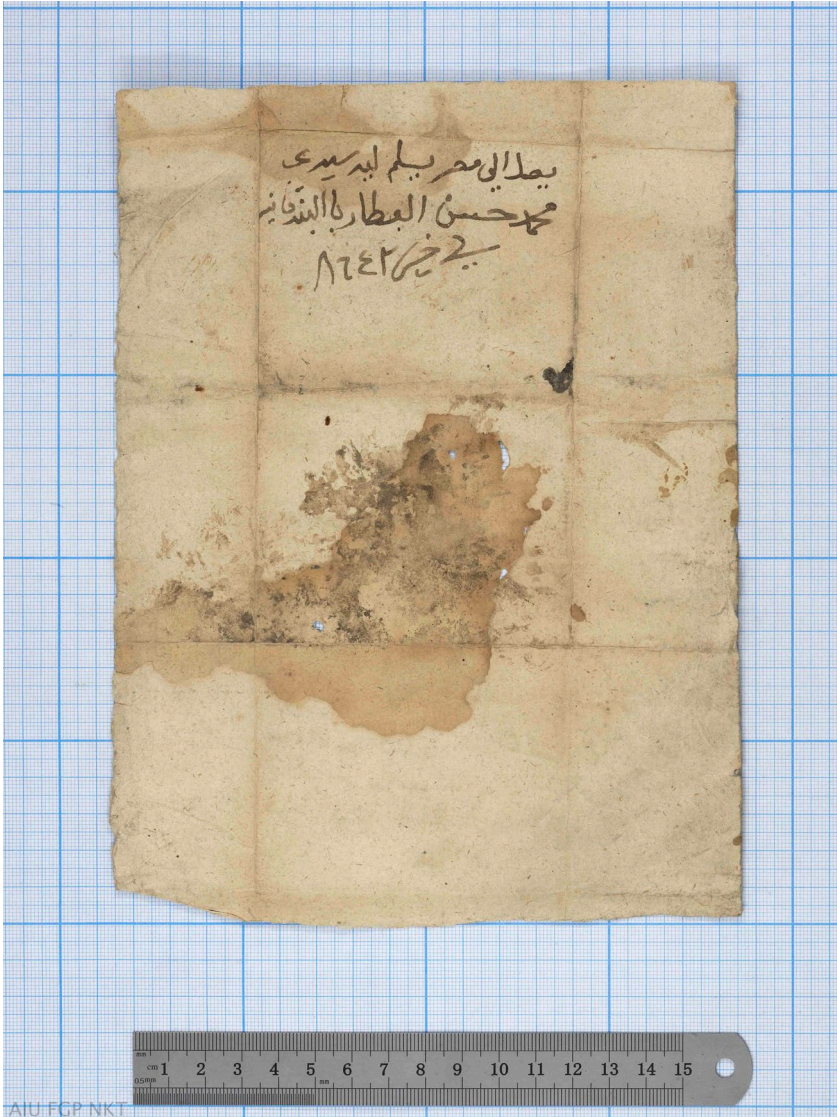


Plate XXV: AIU XII.87, verso. Collection of Cairo Genizah fragments belonging to the Consistoire central de Paris, on deposit at the Library of the Alliance israélite universelle.



DOCUMENT 7: AIU XII.84

IBRĀHĪM AND HIS CHRISTIAN CONTACTS, 1821

1.0. Discussion

AIU XII.84 is an affectionate, even familial, letter, dated 17 Jumādā al-Awwal 1236 AH/19 February 1821 CE, the top line or two of which has, unfortunately, been torn off. It is from another Ibrāhīm, though, to judge from the context and the tone, not the powerful merchant of Document 5. The name(s) of his correspondent(s) have not survived, but we can probably surmise that he, or they, are Christians since most of the people whom the letter mentions in connection with them are Christian. Ibrāhīm himself may also be Christian.

Ibrāhīm has apparently received a packet of letters from the addressee and has passed two of them along to Abū Rafā'īl (Raphael) and Abū Andraūs (Andrew), whom he describes as 'our uncle' and 'our brother', respectively. These terms could indicate blood relatives; alternatively, 'uncle' could be simply a term of respect for an older man, while 'brother' could be an expression of friendship. Apart from Abū Rafā'īl, all the men named in this letter are characterised as 'our brother', and their names, with one exception, consist of Abū (spelled with an extraneous *ālif* at the end of the word) plus a Christian name: thus, in addition to Abū Andraūs, Ibrāhīm mentions Abū Ibrāhīm Petro [i]bn Ḥanna

(Peter son of John), Abū Tādras (Theodore), Abū Mubārak (?), and Abū Jirjis (George). It is possible that all these men are Ibrāhīm's biological brothers, and that collectively, they represent a large Christian family that is separated because of travel for trade or for some other reason. Ibrāhīm, Abū Rafā'il, Abū Andraūs, Petro ibn Ḥanna, Abū Tādras, and Abū Mubārak seem to be in one location while Abū Jirjis and Ibrāhīm's mother seem to be in another. Abū Jirjis, however, appears not to belong to Ibrāhīm's immediate family since the letter conveys greetings to him and 'his brothers', as well as the people of his 'residence' (*manzil*).

Alternatively, some or all of the men whom Ibrāhīm mentions may be priests or monks in a Christian church, monastery, or similar religious community. This interpretation could also explain the omnipresence of Abū, 'father', which could be Ibrāhīm's way of rendering Abā, the title commonly used for a Coptic priest.

In addition to the letters, Ibrāhīm mentions a garment (*kiswa*) that his mother seeks to acquire, apparently after trying it on. The term *kiswa*, or *kisā'*, can apply to a wide range of clothing, cloths, and drapes, or to clothing in general; most famously, it refers to the ceremonial covering that is draped over the Ka'ba in Mecca and renewed every year (Wensinck and Jomier 1978). In various medieval Arabic sources, the term refers to an enveloping mantle of the sort worn in public by women, or it could serve as a more or less generic term for a wrap (Stillman 2000, 14, 50–51, 88, 96; Shallal 2024, Sec. 1). Here, it probably means a voluminous wrap of the sort that a woman of a certain age

would find indispensable. As a devoted son—perhaps the eldest son?—separated from his mother, Ibrāhīm tries to ensure that she gets the garment she needs.

‘Her excellency the dear mother’, mentioned in the final lines of the letter, may well be Ibrāhīm’s mother again, in which case her two daughters, who bear the unusual names Fatūta and Qamyāta, would be his sisters. Did something happen to cause the male members of the family to leave the mother and daughters, even temporarily? 1235 AH/1820–21 CE was the year when Meḥmed ‘Alī Pasha invaded the Sudan (al-Jabartī, ‘*Ajā’ib al-āthār*, IV:362); the invasion commenced in Ramaḍān 1235 AH/June 1820 CE, just a month before Ibrāhīm’s initial letter. Perhaps the brothers were trying to avoid conscription and/or involvement.

2.0. Text

Paper, top torn away, some crumpling. 20.540 cm x 19.998 cm.

Recto

[At least one line is missing.]

- | | |
|---|---|
| بعد اود [؟] الشوق [] | 1 |
| لا يخفا صرف محبتكم الداعي لتحريره اول الشوال عن الخاطر العاطر تانيا | 2 |
| حضر لنا حروف محبتكم الصحة [] | |
| الباري سبحانه الذي حضرتمكم لغاية الصحة والسلام كذلك يطيب خواياه | 3 |
| احدهم الى عمنا ابوا رفائيل والثاني باسم اخونا | |

- 4 ابوا اندراوس واوصلناهم الى المذكورين كذلك اخبرتونا من قبل الكسوة انها والدتي تجريت الامتعا اوعدوكم على يوم السبت
- 5 انشا الله تعالى وقت حضور الكسوة المذكورة تصدقوها حكما اخبرنا حياتكم ولاكن لا نوصيكم بخصوص تقاوم [؟] ...
- 6 اخونا ابوا ابراهيم بترو بن حنا واخونا ابوا تادرس واخونا ابوا مبارك [؟] لان المذكورين يخصوصكم باوفر الشوق
- 7 الكلي ومن مستوعي [؟] عشقهم من حضرتمكم اخبرونا على ذالك فنسال من المسما الى هنا [؟] ان لا يحرمننا من محبتكم
- 8 كذلك يا اخي تبلغوا شوقنا لحضرة اخونا ابوا جرجس واخوانه واهل منزله كذلك منا مزيد الشوق الى ال...
- 9 فتوتة [؟] واختها قمياتة [؟] ووالدتهم ومنا نقبل ايادي حضرة الوالدة العزيزة ونطلب منها الدعا الصالحة
- 10 وكاملما يلزم لكم من قضا المصالح عرفونا عنه نقوم بقضاه على الراس والعين والله يسر محفلكم ويديم محبتكم
- 11 ونورنا وكلهم [؟] السعد في خير وسلام ١٧ ج[مادى ال] اول سنة ١٢٣٦ اخيكم ابراهيم

Verso, Lower Right Corner

There is some arithmetical figuring in what appears to be a mixture of western European numerals and Hebrew letters.

3.0. Textual Notes

Recto

- 3, 4, 8. كذلك 'as well' is an alternative spelling of كذلك.
7. ذلك is an alternative spelling of ذلك.
11. كلهم 'all of them': كلکم, 'all of you', would be more logical here.

4.0. Translation

Recto

[At least one line is missing.]

1. After [expressing our] most affectionate [?] longing [].
2. The abundance of your love is well-known [lit., 'not hidden'], which was the reason for my writing on 1 Shawwal [1 Shawwal 1235/11 July 1820] in a fragrant state of mind. Then your affectionate letters [lit., 'letters of your love'] reached us. Health []
3. the Creator, praise him, that your excellency is in robust health and well-being, and may he [the Creator] be good to his [i.e., your] brothers. The first [letter] is to our uncle [or 'elder'] Abū Rafā'il and the second in the name of our brother
4. Abū Andraūs, and we delivered them to the two aforementioned. You also informed us, regarding the garment, that my mother sampled the goods. They promised you by Saturday,

5. God the exalted willing. When the aforementioned garment arrives, verify it legally.³⁸ We have informed you [of this], by your life, but we won't give you instructions regarding the confrontation [?] []
6. our brother Abū Ibrāhīm Petro [i]bn Ḥanna and our brother Abū Tādras and our brother Abū Mubārak [?] because the aforementioned greet you with the utmost affection,
7. and from the greatness [?] of their love [they request] of your excellency to inform us of that. Ask each of those named thus far [?] not to deprive us of your affection.
8. As well, o brother, convey our longing to his excellency our brother Abū Jirjis and his brothers, and to the people of his residence, as well, from us, copious longing to the []
9. Fatūta [?] and her sister Qamyāta [?] and their mother, and as for us, we kiss the hands of her excellency the dear mother and ask her for her pious prayers.
10. Any task that you require, tell us about it, and we will gladly carry it out. May God make your assemblies happy and prolong your love,
11. and may fortune shine on us and all of them [?] in health and peace. 17 J[umāda al-]Awwal 1236 [19 February 1821]. Your brother Ibrāhīm.

³⁸ This would presumably mean something like obtaining an official receipt.

Verso, Lower Right Corner

There is some arithmetical figuring in what appears to be a mixture of western European numerals and Hebrew letters.

Plate XXVI: AIU XII.84, recto. Collection of Cairo Genizah fragments belonging to the Consistoire central de Paris, on deposit at the Library of the Alliance israélite universelle.



4. THE RA'IS AL-YAHŪD AND OTHER RABBIS

These four documents feature rabbis: in particular, the rabbi who led Egypt's Jewish community under the title Ra'is al-Yahūd (Documents 1 and 2) and, in the nineteenth century, the Chief Rabbi (Turkish, *Ḥāḥām Başı*) who ostensibly represented all Rabbanite Jews in the Ottoman Empire (Document 4). All four documents coincide with milestones in the history of Jewish communal leadership in Egypt and in the Ottoman Empire, or with milestones in Ottoman history. While the first document mentions the Ra'is al-Yahūd only in passing, possibly in reference to his residence in Ḥārat Zuwayla, the document is dated 777 AH/1375 CE, the same year when the last member of the dynasty of *nagīds* founded by Moses Maimonides (529–600 AH/1135–1204 CE), left Egypt for a 25-year sojourn in Syria. Document 2, from 120 years later, illustrates the administrative preoccupations of the last rabbinical family to hold the nagidate. Document 4 offers evidence that the title *Ḥāḥām Başı* was in use before the office was officially created as part of the westernising reforms that the Ottoman government undertook in the mid-nineteenth century. Document 3, meanwhile, describes a rabbi travelling overland to Jerusalem at the height of the seventeenth-century crisis that briefly threatened the empire's existence, a time when brigandage in the countryside made interregional travel especially perilous.

Collectively, these documents illustrate how Muslim state institutions, and above all the *sharīʿa* courts, routinely mediated the internal affairs of the Mamluk Sultanate's and the Ottoman Empire's Jewish communities. A late Mamluk-era court certifies the Ra'īs al-Yahūd's disposition of *waqf* property while a late Ottoman court certifies the Chief Rabbi's commitment to repaying the loan he has obtained from an overseas merchant. During the seventeenth-century crisis, an associate of the travelling rabbi submits a formal petition to a provincial official who is in a position to provide security on the road. As for Document 1, it shows a *sharīʿa* court presiding over the redistribution of property in a neighbourhood that was the main locus of Jewish residence in Cairo but, at the same time, the site of the Coptic patriarchate and home to a significant Muslim population.

DOCUMENT 1: CUL OR. 1080 4.61

A PROPERTY TRANSFER IN ḤĀRAT ZUWAYLA, 1375

1.0. Discussion

In this badly torn *sharīʿa* court document, dated 2 Muḥarram 777 AH/3 June 1375 CE, an unnamed woman transfers one-quarter of a large house to her son Sharaf al-Dīn Mūsā. Much of the document's recto comprises a description of the property and its boundaries. The house is located in Ḥārat Zuwayla, a neighbourhood in the northwest of the original Fatimid city of al-Qāhira, southwest of Bāb al-Futūḥ and northwest of Bāb Zuwayla, respectively the northern and southern gates of al-Qāhira. Ḥārat Zuwayla became the centre of Coptic residence in al-Qāhira following the catastrophic Muslim–Coptic religious riots of 721 AH/1321 CE. These riots, triggered by the Mamluk sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's demolition of a Coptic church to make way for his eponymous pond (al-Birkat al-Nāṣiriyya), resulted in a mass conversion of Copts to Islam. Afterward, the Coptic Patriarch settled permanently in Ḥārat Zuwayla, which housed one of the two Coptic churches in al-Qāhira to have been rebuilt following the riots. (In the seventeenth century, however, the patriarchate moved to Ḥārat al-Rūm.¹) Thus it is perhaps unsurprising

¹ al-Maqrīzī (*Khīṭaṭ*, II:375, 756; III:812–14, 822–24); Behrens-Abouseif (1986, 118, 122, 124).

that the property at the heart of this court case is initially ‘endowed to the Christians’ (*muwaqaffa li’l-Naṣrāniyya*), probably Coptic Christians. It may even have been one of the many structures endowed to Ḥārat Zuwayla’s ancient Church of the Virgin Mary. Supposedly a pre-Islamic structure, the church had been destroyed during the riots but was quickly rebuilt and, by the time of our court case, was the seat of the Coptic patriarch (al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, III:810; Behrens-Abouseif 1986, 122).

1.1. David ben Joshua Maimonides

Yet Ḥārat Zuwayla had also been al-Qāhira’s principal Jewish quarter since the early eleventh century and would remain so through the Ottoman period (Behrens-Abouseif 1986, 122, 124, 131). Intriguingly, our document’s second line mentions the Head of the Jews (Raʾīs al-Yahūd), who in 1375 would have been David ben Joshua Maimonides (ca. 1335–1415), the last of the dynasty of Heads of the Jews founded by the legendary scholar Moses Maimonides. Coincidentally, 1375 was the year that David fled Cairo for a quarter-century stint in Syria, probably because of a dispute within the Egyptian Rabbanite Jewish community. Current scholarly consensus holds that while a substitute assumed the Egyptian office during David ben Joshua’s Syrian interlude, David returned to Cairo shortly before 1400 and resumed his duties as Raʾīs al-Yahūd until his death in about 1415.²

Sharaf al-Dīn Mūsā and his mother, however, were probably not Jewish but Muslim. Thus the reason for mentioning the

² Ashtor (2007); Bareket (2010); cf. Mann (1970, I:427); Fenton (1984, 40, 42 n. 54).

Raʿīs al-Yahūd in this court case is unclear. A plausible explanation is locational: his residence may have been near the house described in our document.

1.2. The Property and Its History

The house in question seems to be a large courtyard house of the type that had been common in the Mediterranean region since classical antiquity.³ The word used to designate it, however, is *dār*, which could designate a structure of virtually any size, used for residential or commercial purposes, or both.⁴ It seems to include two upper-level residential units, or *ṭabaqas*, a word that can also refer to separate storeys of a structure.⁵ These are connected by two flights of stairs; on one side of the upper storey are arched windows (*ṭāqāt*),⁶ covered by wooden screens (Goitein 1971, 145; 1983, 62, 118), overlooking the street. Each floor contains a covered courtyard (*dūr qāʿa*) (Harrison 2016, 96–98, 303, 305, 378)⁷ and various other appurtenances. It is not clear that either mother or son lived in this structure, although they may certainly have done so. Alternatively, the house may have been primarily a source of rental income: a *dār* was commonly owned and occupied by multiple parties, some of whom might rent their

³ Raymond (1985, 305–6); Harrison (2016, 71–76, 79).

⁴ Goitein (1983, 56–57); Harrison (2016, 79, 80, 82, 83, 120, 236, 308).

⁵ Goitein (1983, 58–59, 70, 84, cf. 56–78); Khan (1993, 56, 58 l. 5, 135, 136 ll. 6, 13); Harrison (2016, 79, 82, 83, 99–101, 302, 384).

⁶ This Persian word can also mean ‘arches’ in modern Arabic.

⁷ Goitein defines *dūr qāʿa* as ‘that part of the inner floor where one slips off one’s shoes’ (1983, 67).

portions to others. Such arrangements extended to endowed properties, including endowments to Coptic churches (Harrison 2016, 80–82). Regardless, the document attests to the transfer or turning over (*intiqāl*) of the *waqf* property to the private property (*milk*) of the son in a process known as *tamlīk* (Richards 1972, 108–12; Livingston 2018, 66–67).

The mother may well have sought this outcome from the *sharīʿa* court with her own mortality in mind, wishing to provide her son with a secure abode free of competing claims from members of her family of origin. Alternatively, she may have wished to provide him with a reliable source of rental income. Or she may have had both goals in mind.

The document's verso constitutes three examples of what in the context of Arabic court cases involving *waqf* and/or heritable property is often called a *faṣl* or *faṣl ḥawāla* (see Ch. 1, Doc. 1), cataloguing subsequent transactions involving the property in question over the next seventy-five years. The description of the first transaction (verso, top left) is so badly damaged that it is hard to decipher much of it beyond the fact that it occurred between 782 AH/1380 CE and 802 AH/1400 CE, thus between five and 25 years after the property transfer described on the recto. The far more legible second transaction (verso, middle left), however, describes the transfer of this same one-quarter of the house in 808 AH/1405 CE from the private property of one Ṣafī al-Dīn Muḥammad to that of the blind woman Khadija, daughter of Muḥammad ibn Nāṣir. Khadija's father was a merchant in Cairo's Bunduqāniyyīn quarter, located to the southeast of Ḥarat Zuwayla (see Ch. 3, Doc. 6); during the late Mamluk era, this area

was a thriving commercial hub. Possibly the preceding *faṣl* explains how Ṣafī al-Dīn acquired the property, perhaps even from Sharaf al-Dīn Mūsā. Regardless, Ṣafī al-Dīn is clearly Muslim, as is Khadija, so even if Sharaf al-Dīn Mūsā were not Muslim himself, the property has passed into Muslim hands in the years since his mother transferred it to him. Also noteworthy is the fact that a person with a disability came to own this quarter-house.

As for the third *faṣl* (verso, upper right), from 855 AH/1451 CE, it involves transfer of half of the quarter-house, thus one-eighth, to the private property of al-Ḥājj Mu‘ammar ibn Zayn al-Dīn [?] ‘Alī. Unfortunately, the document is too damaged for us to tell whether the family of Khadija had owned the property until that time or kept the remaining one-eighth. Regardless, at least half of the property appears to have been transferred to another Muslim owner. This series of Muslim owners, in addition to Qāḍī Shams al-Dīn, the owner of a neighbouring property mentioned in the original 777 AH/1375 CE transfer, could conceivably reflect an increase in Muslim population, possibly including converted Copts and their descendants, in Ḥārat Zuwayla in the decades following the 1321 riots.

Overall, our document illustrates a fundamental change in status of a property that, over half a century after the disastrous 1321 riots, was still endowed to the Coptic community, if not to its oldest church.⁸ Yet in the succeeding three-quarters of a century, it was deaccessioned from the Coptic *waqf* to become the

⁸ Al-Maqrīzī (*Khīṭaṭ*, III:782) notes that in 755 AH/1354 CE, the Mamluk sultan ordered all lands (*arāḍī*) endowed to churches to be ‘released’ (*tahrīr*). (This was the same year that the sultan ordered non-Muslim

private property of a series of Muslim, or at least predominantly Muslim, owners. While it was not unusual for a property of this kind to be endowed to a *waqf*, deaccessioned, then re-endowed (Livingston 2020, 532–38), this was not the fate of this particular quarter-*dār*. Instead, it remained in private hands and, at the end of the period that the document covers, was divided yet again.

2.0. Text

Paper, top and upper right corner torn away, large hole at upper left, brownish stains down the middle and on left side of verso. 39.020 cm x 35.413 cm.

Folio 1, Recto

[The first several words of ll. 1–7 are torn away.]

- 1 [] [شهوده... سطر ع] [لى] []
 - 2 [] [القاهرة المحروسة بحارة زويلة بزقاق غير نفذ يعرف بدرب الر] [ائد؟]...
 - 3 [] [الموقفة للنصرانية وصفها انها تشتمل على بايين احدهما مربع يغلق عليه ريس اليهود المعروف []
 - 4 [] [سلم يصعد من عليه الى مسترقتين ثم الى سطحها والباب الثاني يصعد زوجا باب يدخل منه الى قاعة تحوي ل []
- اليه من على سلم شارع بالزقاق عليه زوجا باب يدخل

inheritance cases to be adjudicated by Muslim courts; see the discussion of Doc. 2 below.) Although the edict may have applied primarily to agricultural and/or undeveloped lands, it may have had a chilling effect on the maintenance of Coptic *waqf* property in general.

- 5 [] ه الى طبقة لطيفة تحوي مرافقا وحقوقا ثم يصعد من بقية السلم المذكور الى طبقة تحوي ابوابا ودور قاعة مسقفة بقبا بطاقات مطلة على الزقاق
- 6 [] باوله يصعد من عليه الى سطحها ثم يصعد من بقية السلم المذكور الى طبقة تحوي ابوابا ودور قاعة [مسقفة ومرافقا] وحقوقا وذات القبة الخالصة
- 7 [] ويحيط [بها ويجمعها] حدود اربعة الح[د القبلي] [] والسلم والروشن
- 8 [] طاقات والحد البحري ينتهى الى ملك يعرف بابن لفينة [؟] والى ملك يعرف بالقاضي شمس [الدين] [] [والحد الشرقي] [] الزقاق وفيه
- 9 طاقات الطبقة الاولى وبعضه الى ملك القاضي القاضي شمس الدين والحد الغربي ينتهى الى ملك يع[رف] [] [] تمليكا صحيحا
- 10 شرعيا مشتملا على الايجاب والقبول والوصول والتسليم الشرعي بعد اعترافهما بالنظر والمعرفة بذلك واقرت [المملكة المذكورة ب] اعاليه انها لم يبق لها في الحصّة المذكورة وهي الربع ستة اسهم من اربعة وعشرين سهما من جميع الدار الموصوفة المحدودة باعاليه حق ولا دعاوى و [] لا شي [قل] ولا جل
- 12 وان الحصّة المذكورة المملكة اعلاه صارت ملكا لولديها شرف الدين موسى المذكور باعاليه دونها ودون كل احد بسببها بحكم التملك المشروح اعلاه يتصرف في ذلك تصرف
- 13 الملاك في املاكهم وذوى الحقوق في حقوقهم من غير مشارك له في ذلك ولا منازع وذلك بحضور ولدها المذكور وصدقها على ذلك كله وقد ذكر في كتاب

- 14 الوقف المذكور ما يدل على انتقال هذه الحصة المملكة فيه الى ملك شرف الدين موسى المذكور في تاريخه وبه شهد بتاريخ يوم الاحد المبارك الثاني من شهر الله المحرم سنة
- 15 سبع وسبعين وسبعماية وذكرنا ان الطبقة الاولى اللطيفة والطبقة الثانية التي علوها عمرا وعملا طبقة واحدة بمرافق وحقوق بطاقات على الزقاق وحسب الله تعالى [؟]

Witnesses, right to left

- 1 شهد على المملكة والمملك له المذكورين
- 2 اعلاه بما نسب اليهما باعاليه في تاريخه
- 3 المعين فيه ابو بكر ابن محمد ابن عيسى الزولوي [؟]

- 1 شهد على المملكة والمملك له
- 2 المذكورين اعلاه بما نسب اليهما
- 3 باعاليه في تاريخه المعين فيه
- 4 محمد ابن يوسف ابن عبد الكريم
- 5 الانصاري

- 1 حسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل
- 2 شهد على المملكة والمملك له المذكورين

3 اعلاه بما نسب اليهما اعلاه في تاريخه

4 محمد ابن ابي بكر [؟] ابن يوسف [؟]

Right Side, Perpendicular

A red seal. To the left of it is the name Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī [?]. Beneath it are two lines of illegible Arabic, cut off by a tear.

Folio 1, Verso, Left Column

Top

1 [] باطنه والى الملك [؟] []

2 بالخزانة وربع ... []

3 شهد شهود كتاب

4 في ثاني جمادة الاخرة سنة اثنين []

5 شهد على [؟] [ذلك]

6 [] ... احمد ... []

Bottom

1 الحمد لله رب ال[عالمين؟]

2 [ان]تقل[ت] جميع الحصة التي مبلغها الربع []

3 [] جميع الدار الموصوفة ... []

4 باطنه بالابتياح الشرعي [؟] من ملك صفى الدين محمد المزبور اعلاه

5 الى ملك الضريرة خديجة ابنة [؟] محمد ابن ناصر ابن محمد ابن

شرف [؟] ابن يعقوب

6 التاجر بالخانوت الذي بالبندقى [؟] انتقالا شرعيا حسبما...

7 كتاب المبايعه الموافق تاريخه وشهد في تاسع عشر شهر الله

8 المحرم سنة ثمان ثمانماية حسينا الله ونعم الوكيل

Witnesses, right to left

1 شهد في اصله

2 عبد الله ابن محمد ابن عمر ابن...

1 شهد في اصله

2 محمد ابن ابراهيم [؟]

Folio 1, Verso, Right Column

1 الح[مد لله]

2 انتقل النصف [؟] الحصه التي قدرها ثلاثة اسهم من اصل اربع وعشرين

[اسهم]

[A huge tear on the right side has removed the beginnings of ll. 3–5.]

3 [] الحدود الموصوفة باطنه من ملك ناصر الدين...

[There is a large blot or stain at the end of ll. 4–5.]

4 []...الكامل...

- 5 ...المربع [؟]... []
- 6 [] ...الى ملك الحاج معمر ابن زين [؟] الدين علي ...
- 7 انتقلا شرعيا شهدت به فكتبت ورقة [؟]... []
- 8 بتاريخ رابع شوال سنة خمس وخمسين وثمانماية

[The following line, above the witness statement to the left, is almost entirely obscured, but it comes right before witnesses.]

9 [الشهود]

Witnesses, right to left

- 1 شهد للثبوت [؟] الفقير الى الله
- 2 ...المولى [؟]
- 3 ...ابن [؟]
- 4 احمد

- 1 شهد في اصله
- 2 الفقير الى
- 3 الله تعالى
- 4 محمد ابن ...

Folio 2, Recto

[] בצא []

Folio 1, Verso, Left Column

4. [] سنة اثنين ‘year [] two’: It has to be after 777 (the date on the recto) and before 808 (the date below), so it must be 782 (10 September 1380), 792 (25 May 1390), or 802 (6 February 1400).

Witnesses

1st and 2nd, l. 1. في اصله ‘in the original of [the document]’: This indicates that the present document is a condensation of a longer original, possibly the *waqfiyya* alluded to in recto ll. 13–14. See Livingston (2018, 73–74 n. 226; 2020, 540).

Folio 1, Verso, Right Column

2. النصف [؟] الحصة التي قدرها ثلاثة اسهم من اصل اربع وعشرين [اسهم] ‘the half, the portion that comprises three shares of the original 24 [shares]’: In other words, this is half of the quarter-house, or one-eighth of the total house, thus three shares of the full 24.

4.0. Translation

Folio 1, Recto

[The first several words of ll. 1–7 are torn away.]

1. [] its witnesses ... drawn up f[or] []

2. [] well-protected al-Qāhira, in Ḥārat Zuwayla, in the lane with no outlet⁹ known as the 'blazed trail'...the Head of the Jews, known as []
3. [] endowed as *waqf* to the Christians. The description of it is that it includes two gates, one of them rectangular; one leaf of it closes over the other. Through it one enters a courtyard¹⁰ containing []
4. [] stairs. One ascends on them [lit., 'it'] to two loggias,¹¹ then to the roof [of the courtyard]. The second gate is accessed by the stairs on the lane. Over it is a door-leaf [as above], and through it one enters

⁹ My thanks to Professor Tamer El-Leithy for clarifying this phrase. See also Khan (1993, 110 and 111, l. 4; 117 and 120, l. 8).

¹⁰ For this meaning of *qā'a*, see Goitein (1983, 63); Khan (1993, 21, 56 and 58, ll. 6–9, 17; 61 and 65, l. 10; 91 and 93–94, ll. 8, 10; 150 and 151, l. 4; 173 and 174, l. 9); Harrison (2016, 82–83, 96–97, 100–1, 138, 157, 300–1, 302–3, 305, 382). It often connoted a courtyard with the rooms surrounding it. It could also mean a ground-floor unit, as in Khan (1993, 69 and 70, l. 5; 78 and 81, l. 6; 85 and 86, l. 16; 97 and 99, ll. 8–9; 102 and 104, l. 8; 167 and 170, l. 19); and Harrison (2016, 82, 99).

¹¹ For this meaning of *mustaraqa*, see Goitein (1983, 73); Khan (1993, 135 and 136, l. 6; 137 and 138, l. 7); Harrison (2016, 141, 302, 318, 382).

5. [] a narrow apartment¹² containing facilities and appurtenances.¹³ Then one ascends by the remaining aforementioned stairs to an apartment containing gates and a covered courtyard roofed with a vault with windows¹⁴ overlooking the lane.
6. [] in the first part [of the stairs?], one ascends to [the courtyard's] roof, then ascends by the remainder of the aforementioned stairs to an apartment containing gates and a [roofed] [?] covered courtyard with [facilities] and appurtenances, with a plain vault [i.e., without windows]
7. [] It is surrounded and enclosed by four boundaries. [The southern boundary] [] and the stairs and the bay window¹⁵

¹² See the document discussion, section 1.2. As noted above, *ṭabaqa* could also mean a storey of a house, and it is possible that it carries this meaning here. For this use of *laṭīf*, see Khan (1993, 61 and 65, l. 8; 78 and 81, l. 6; and 84, citing Reinhard Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*).

¹³ For this interpretation of مرافق وحقوق, see Khan (1993, 145, 170). I have translated حقوق as 'appurtenances' since this word seems more appropriate to the context than 'rights'.

¹⁴ Goitein (1971, 145; and 1983, 62, 118). An arched window with no panes, covered by wooden screens, is intended.

¹⁵ For this meaning of *rawshan*, see Khan (1993, 21; 91 and 93, l. 8; 124 and 125, l. 9).

8. [] windows, and the northern¹⁶ boundary extends to the private property known as Ibn Lafīna [?] and to the private property known as Qāḍī Shams [al-Dīn] [] [and the eastern boundary] [] the street, and in it
9. the windows of the upper apartment, and some of it to the private property of the *qāḍī*, Qāḍī Shams al-Dīn, and the western boundary extends to the private property [known as] [], a valid, legal transfer of ownership,
10. including consent and acceptance, a legal receipt and handing over, after the two of them acknowledged it by sight and familiarity with it. [The woman transferring ownership mentioned] above acknowledged that she has no remaining right
11. in the aforementioned share, which is one-quarter, six shares of 24 shares of the entire house described and delimited above, and no claim [] and nothing, [not a little] and not much,
12. and that the transferred portion mentioned above has become the private property of her son, the above-mentioned Sharaf al-Dīn Mūsā, rather than her [property] or [the property of] anyone connected to her, by reason of the property transfer outlined above, and that he may dispose of it as

¹⁶ *Baḥrī* refers to the sea, here the Mediterranean, which is north of the site; thus the connotation is ‘northern’.

13. owners do with their properties and possessors of appurtenances do with their appurtenances, with no partner in it and no opponent. This was in the presence of her aforementioned son, and he corroborated her in all of this. There was recorded in the document
14. of the aforementioned *waqf* that which attests to the turning over of this share transferred in it [i.e., in the document] to the private property of the aforementioned Sharaf al-Dīn Mūsā on this date, and it was witnessed on the date blessed Sunday, the second of God's month Muḥarram in the year
15. 777 [10 June 1375]. They mentioned, with regard to the first narrow apartment and the second apartment above it, that the two were renovated and turned into a single apartment, with facilities and appurtenances, and with windows overlooking the lane. God the exalted [?] is sufficient for me.

Witnesses, right to left

- 1st Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Isa al-Zawlawī [?] bore witness to the [female] transferer of property and the recipient of it mentioned above, with what has been attributed to the two of them above, on the date specified in it [the document].
- 2nd Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn 'Abd al-Karīm al-Anṣārī bore witness to the [female] transferer of property and the re-

recipient of it mentioned above, with what has been attributed to the two of them above, on the date specified in it.

- 3rd God is sufficient for us, and he is the best disposer. Muhammad ibn Abī Bakr [?] ibn Yūsuf [?] bore witness to the [female] transferer of property and the recipient of it mentioned above, with what has been attributed to the two of them above, on this date.

Right Side, Perpendicular

A red seal. To the left of it is the name Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī [?]. Beneath it are two lines of illegible Arabic, cut off by a tear.

Folio 1, Verso, Left Column

Top

1. [] on the recto and to the private property [?] []
2. in the treasury, and a quarter of the ... []
3. The witnesses of the document witnessed it
4. on 2 Jumādā al-Ākhira in the year []2.
- 5–6. [] ... Aḥmad ... [] bore witness to [?] [that].

Bottom

1. Praise to God, the lord of the [universe?].
2. The entire portion amounting to one-quarter [of the house] was turned over
3. [] all of the house described... []

4. on the recto, by the legal [?] purchase from the private property of Ṣafī al-Dīn Muḥammad, mentioned above,
5. to the private property of the blind woman Khadīja daughter of [?] Muḥammad ibn Nāṣir ibn Muḥammad ibn Sharaf [?] ibn Ya‘qūb,
6. the merchant in the shop that is in the Bunduqī, a legal turnover in accordance with what...
7. the contract of the same date. Witnessed on the 19th of God’s month
8. Muḥarram, the year 808 [17 July 1405]. God is sufficient to us and the best disposer of affairs.

Witnesses, right to left

- 1st ‘Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar ibn ... bore witness in the original document.
- 2nd Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm [?] bore witness in the original document.

Folio 1, Verso, Right Column

1. P[raise God].
2. The half was turned over: the portion that comprises three shares of the original 24 [shares].

[A huge tear on the right side has removed the beginnings of lines 3–5.]

3. [] the boundaries described on the recto, from the private property of Nāṣir al-Dīn...

[There is a large blot or stain at the end of ll. 4–5.]

4. [] ...the entire...
5. [] ...the square [?][]
6. [] ...and one-quarter to the private property of al-Ḥājj Mu‘ammar ibn Zayn al-Dīn ‘Alī
7. in a legal turnover witnessed by it [the document]. A document was written [?] ... []
8. on the date the fourth of Shawwāl in the year 855 [7 November 1451].

[The following line is almost entirely obscured, but it comes right before witnesses.]

9. [witnesses]

Witnesses, right to left

- 1st The poor one [in need of] God, ... the mullah [?], ... ibn [?] Aḥmad, witnessed the evidence [?].
- 2nd The poor one [in need of] God the exalted, Muḥammad ibn ..., bore witness in the original.

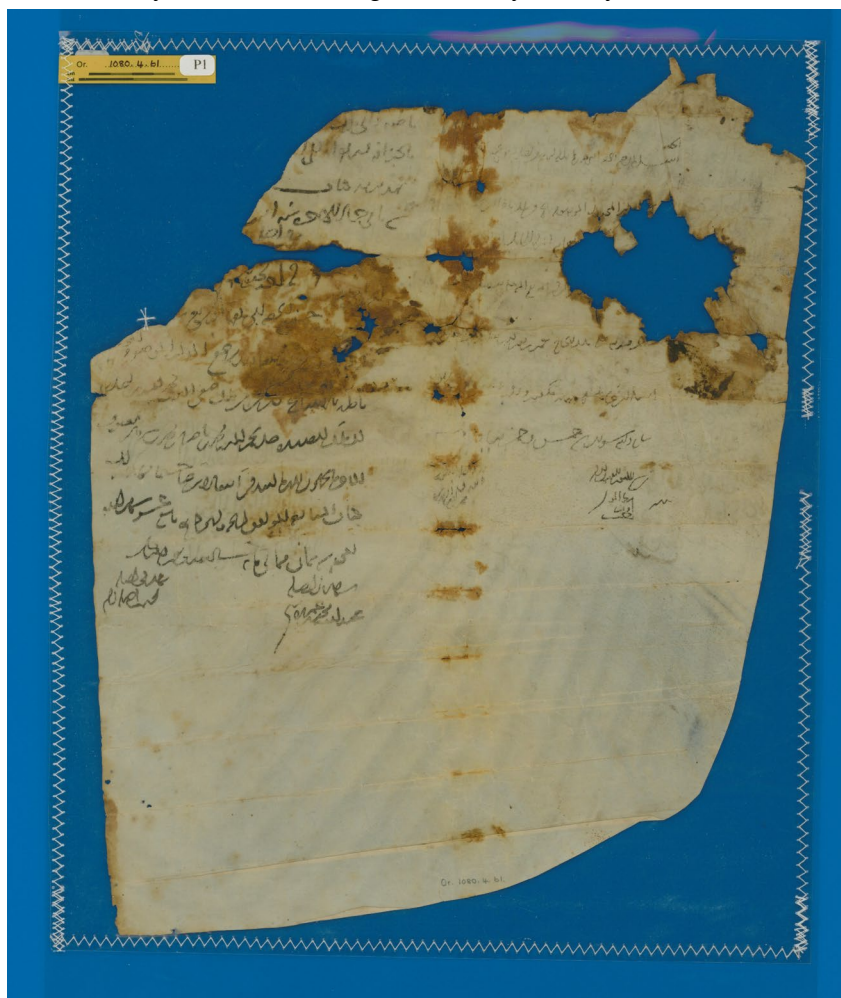
Folio 2, Recto

[] B–Ts–A [] [in Hebrew script]

Plate XXVII: CUL Or. 1080 4.61, fol. 1, recto. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Plate XXVIII: CUL Or. 1080 4.61, fol. 1, verso. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



DOCUMENT 2: T-S AR. 51.104

THE RA'ĪS AL-YAHŪD GIVES TWO MU'ALLIMS AUTHORITY OVER WAQF PROPERTY, 1499

1.0. Discussion

This document is a legal agreement (*taṣāduq*). Numerous words in the text are obscured by tears, and in addition, the date with which the text concludes is difficult to read, apart from the day and the month, 26 Ramaḍān. Nonetheless, the involvement of Nathan Sholāl, the penultimate Ra'īs al-Yahūd,¹⁷ in the case allows us to interpret the year as *ar[ba'?] tis'a [mi'a]*, 'nine [hundred] [and four?]', i.e., 1499 or thereabouts.

1.1. The Sholāls and the Two *Mu'allims*

By the terms of this agreement, Nathan Sholāl grants administrative rights over Rabbanite *waqf* properties in Cairo and 'Old Cairo', or Fuṣṭāṭ, to Mu'allim 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Mūsā ibn Ṣadaqa

¹⁷ Term 1484–1502; see Arad and Wagner (2025, 47–66, 120–29, 206–9).

‘known as Ibn Ṣanī‘a’¹⁸ and a man who may be his uncle, Mu‘alim Sa‘īd ibn Ṣadaqa ibn Muhadhdhab.¹⁹ In the document, Nathan is called first Ibrāhīm, a name not attested for him in other known sources,²⁰ then Natān ibn Sa‘īd ibn Natān. Sa‘īd (literally, ‘happy’), is the Arabic equivalent of Sa‘adia, the name of Nathan Sholāl’s father (Corcos and Bornstein-Makovetsky 2007; David 2016c, 141). The Sholāls, a family of North African (Maghribī) Jews, with roots in both Algeria and Majorca, were the second of two families of *nagīds* to hold the post of Ra’īs al-Yahūd in the decades following the death of David ben Joshua Maimonides around 1415. Nathan was preceded in the post by Joseph ben Khalīfa and his son Solomon, both physicians, and succeeded by his nephew Isaac Sholāl.²¹ With the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517, however, the office of Ra’īs al-Yahūd was discontinued. Isaac Sholāl was the last person to hold it.

¹⁸ ‘Abd al-Karīm Ṣanī‘a also appears in T-S J1.34 (recto, column 2), along with Manṣūr Ṣanī‘a (recto, column 4), who is also mentioned in T-S NS 324.29 (recto, column 1; see also Ashtor (1970, III:133 [Doc. 72])). Ha-Rāv Ṣanī‘a (הרב צניע) also appears in T-S AS 145.45r. My thanks to Dotan Arad for alerting me to these documents.

¹⁹ A letter to him from the Alexandrian merchant-scholar Moses ibn Judah, dated 18 April 1489, is published in Arad and Wagner (2025, 191–205).

²⁰ His son was also called Ibrāhīm. After the Ottoman conquest of Egypt, he relocated to Jerusalem, as did Isaac Sholāl. Jerusalem’s *sharī‘a* court records include documents related to his property. See David (1972, 325) and Arad and Wagner (2025, 67).

²¹ David (1972; 2016c, 144–50); Cohen (1984, 436); Mazor (2021, 253–54); Arad and Wagner (2025, 42–47, 66–67, 96–119).

As for ‘Abd al-Karīm and his alleged uncle, they presumably do not belong to the Sholāl clan but are presumably fairly influential figures in the Rabbanite Jewish community of greater Cairo if Nathan has entrusted them with oversight of the community’s *waqf* property in its entirety. The family’s prominence apparently carried over into the Ottoman era: ‘Abd al-Karīm’s son Yehūda is mentioned in a *waqf* document from 949 AH/1542 CE (Cairo Community Archive, Doc. 75).²² While ‘Abd al-Karīm’s profession is unspecified in our document, Sa‘īd is identified as a *mutaṭabbib*, or physician (cf. Cohen 1984, 432), although because of the ambiguities of the nouns following his *nasab*, this occupation could also refer to his grandfather Muhadhdhab. Medicine, of course, was a field of endeavour common to leading figures in Egypt’s Jewish communities from at least the Fatimid era through the Ottoman period. Both Jewish and Christian physicians served Egypt’s Muslim rulers. The numerous Mamluk-era edicts prohibiting *dhimmī* physicians from treating Muslims, notably Sultan Jaqmaq’s (r. 842–57 AH/1438–53 CE) 1448 decree, were only sporadically enforced (Mazor 2021, 253–54, 259). In the years before the Sholāls assumed the office of Ra’īs al-Yahūd, in fact, Joseph ben Khalīfa had served as the Mamluk sultan’s physician.²³

²² My thanks to Dotan Arad for alerting me to this document.

²³ Cohen (1984, 436); Mazor (2021, 253); Arad and Wagner (2025, 45).

1.2. The *Waqf* Property

The properties that the two *mu'allims* will administer are called *waqf* in our document. This term was not simply a convenient Arabic synonym for the halakhic endowment known in Hebrew as *heqdes*. By the late fourteenth century, all Jewish pious endowments were established in Muslim courts as *waqf*. This practice was the Jewish community's response to a 755 AH/1354 CE law placing all inheritance cases, regardless of confessional community, under state jurisdiction, thus assigning them to *shari'a* courts.²⁴ Endowing properties as *waqf* allowed the Rabbanite community to control the revenues they produced and avoid having the properties or their revenues confiscated by the Mamluk state.

As for the endowed properties themselves, the document does not specify where in Cairo and in Fustāt they are located. Since Rabbanite *waqfs* would have benefitted Rabbanite synagogues and institutions affiliated with them, such as Torah–Talmud academies (Hebrew plural, *yeshivot*) and charity kitchens, many of the properties endowed to these institutions could probably be found in the same neighbourhoods where the Rabbanite synagogues were located under the late Mamluk Sultanate: in Cairo, Ḥārat Zuwayla; in Fustāt, the precinct of the Babylon fortress, where the Ben Ezra synagogue is located (see Arad and Wagner 2025, 58). This by no means indicates, however, that no

²⁴ al-Maqrīzī (*Khīṭaṭ*, III:784); Arad (2017a, 35–38; 2023, 24–25, 27–33); Mazor (2021, 257–58, 263–64).

endowed properties were located outside these quarters. In addition, some of the endowed rental dwellings themselves probably fulfilled a charitable function as low-cost housing for needy members of the Rabbanite community (Arad 2023, 24–25). Otherwise, rental houses could be leased to non-Jews as well as Jews.

Of particular note is the amalgamation of the Rabbanite community's endowed property under a common supervisory authority in the late Mamluk period. During the Ottoman era, in contrast, every community (*qahal*) of Jews—Musta'ribs, Maghribīs, various Sephardic populations, Karaites—would found and administer endowments quite separately from the other communities (Arad 2023, 23–24).

1.3. The *Mu'allims'* Duties

This agreement gives the two *mu'allims* responsibility for the day-to-day functioning of the properties that provide revenue for the *waqfs*. That is to say, they do not occupy the position of superintendent, or *nāẓir*, of the *waqfs*, an overarching supervisory position that transcended the kinds of quotidian duties that our document describes and that was apparently held by Nathan Sholāl himself (Arad and Wagner 2025, 58–61). Instead, their responsibilities seem more like those of a combined property manager and apartment complex superintendent today: they will be vetting prospective tenants and renting properties to them, collecting rent, and making necessary repairs. At the same time, however, they have the authority to determine whether a given property should be used for commercial or for residential purposes. Their criterion for this decision is 'the prosperity and benefit of

the *waqf*, which must refer, at least in part, to the relative amounts of rent that a shop and a dwelling would generate. That calculation in turn would require an appraisal of the long-term solvency and reliability of the tenants. Carrying out all these responsibilities would inevitably require the two *mu'allims* to visit all the properties regularly and keep tabs on the occupants.

Our document refers to 'Abd al-Karīm's and Sa'īd's new responsibilities as *taḥadduth*, literally, 'spokespersonship'. This term is related to the label that the document gives Nathan Sholāl: *mutaḥaddith*, or 'spokesman', for the Rabbanite Jews of Cairo and Fuṣṭāṭ. The equation of supervisory responsibility with 'speaking for' a person, community, or legal entity is not uncommon in court documents of the medieval and early modern eras (Little 1984, 200; and Ch. 3, Doc. 1, recto l. 4). Sholāl literally spoke for the Rabbanite Jews of greater Cairo. For their part, the two *mu'allims* spoke for the properties in the sense of representing the *waqf*'s interests, but they probably also spoke for the residents, artisans, and merchants who inhabited these properties in their dealings with the Ra'īs al-Yahūd and with representatives of the Mamluk government.

1.4. Witnesses

Two Muslim witnesses appear at the end of this document. They would seem to be illiterate, since the scribe who prepared the document signed their names for them, to judge from the script. The second of these witnesses, 'Alī ibn Muḥammad 'the renter' (*al-mustā'jir* [?]) could be a tenant of 'Abd al-Karīm and Sa'īd. In addition to these two witnesses, Mu'allim Sulaymān ibn Yūsuf

ibn Shamaw'al, 'the son of the merchant', corroborates the agreement. This is not Solomon ben Joseph ben Khalifa, Nathan Sholāl's predecessor as *Ra'is al-Yahūd*, who died in 1482, before Nathan took office (Arad and Wagner 2025, 44–45). Instead, he is apparently a prominent merchant's son, and perhaps a merchant himself, whose presence lends additional authority to the proceedings.

2.0. Text

Paper, top right and left corners torn away, stains at centre and bottom. 37.00 cm x 28.00 cm.

Recto

- 1 باسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
- 2 اشهد على الرئيس ابراهيم المدعو ناتان بن سعيد بن ناتان اليهودي الربان
ال[م]غربي ريس...[اليهود]
- 3 والمتحدث عليهم شهوده واشهادا شرعيا في صحة وسلامة وطوعية واختيار
وجواز الامر []
- 4 انه اقام كل من المعلم عبد الكريم بن موسى بن صدقة اليهودي الربان الساكن
ب[] [المعروف]
- 5 بابن صنيعة والمعلم سعيد بن صدقة بن مهذب اليهودي الربان المتطبب
المعروف بجده في التحدث علي [وقاف؟]
- 6 اليهود الربان الكاينة بالقاهرة المحروسة وبمصر العتيقة الجارية تحت نظره
المعلومة عندهم شرعا وفي قبض ريع ذلك

- 7 وفي ايجاره وفي خلوه واسكانه بما يرياه في ذلك من الحظ والمصلحة لجهة الوقف وفي عمارة ذلك وترميمه اقامهما
- 8 في ذلك مقام نفسه ورضي بقولهما وفعلهما في ذلك مجتمعين ومتفرقين قبلا ذلك منه قبولاً شرعياً وتصادقوا[١] على
- 9 ذلك تصادقا شرعياً ومنع الرئيس المذكور من يتعرض اليهما من اليهود لما راي لجهة الوقف في ذلك من الحظ والمصلحة
- 10 والغبطة وذلك بحضرة المعلم سليمان بن يوسف بن شموال اليهودي الريان المعروف بابن التاجر ورضاه بذلك
- 11 وتصديقه على التصديق الشرعي ووكلوا في ثبوت ذلك وطلب الحكم به بتاريخ سادس عشرين شهر رمضان الحرام سنة ار[بع و] تسع [ماية]

Witnesses, right to left

شهد بذلك محمد ابن عباس الما قال [؟]

شهد بذلك علي ابن محمد المستاجر[؟]

Verso: Blank

3.0. Textual Note

Recto

3. صحة وسلامة وطوعية واختيار وجواز الامر 'health, well-being, free will, and choice and ability to conduct affairs': For this terminology, see Little (1984, 189, 379) and Tillier and Vanthieghem (2024, 439, 440). See also Ch. 1, Doc. 1, recto l. 7 for a slightly abbreviated form of this terminology; Ch. 4, Doc. 4, recto l. 8 for a shorthand reference to it; and Ch. 5, Doc. 1, recto l. 14, for a much-abbreviated version.

4.0. Translation

Recto

1. In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate.
2. The [lit., 'its'] witnesses [to the case] testified on behalf of Ra'īs Ibrāhīm, called Nātān [i]bn Sa'īd [i]bn Nātān, the Maghribī Rabbanite Jew, Ra'īs ... [al-Yahūd]
3. and spokesperson for them [i.e., the Rabbanite Jews] in legal testimony while he was in a state of health, well-being, free will, and choice and ability to conduct affairs []
4. that he appointed each of Mu'allim 'Abd al-Karīm [i]bn Mūsā [i]bn Ṣadaqa the Rabbanite Jew living in [] [known]

5. as Ibn Ṣanīʿa, and Muʿallim Saʿīd [i]bn Ṣadaqa [i]bn Muḥadhdhab the Rabbanite Jew, the physician, known as his grandfather,²⁵ as responsible for [the *waqfs* of?]
6. the Rabbanite Jews existing in well-protected Cairo and in neighbouring Old Cairo under his [Nathan's] supervision, known to them legally; and for receiving the revenue of [all of] that [the *waqf* property];
7. and for renting it out; and for allocating it as commercial or residential property,²⁶ as they see fit, for the prosperity and benefit of the *waqf*; and for [the property's] construction and repair. He appointed the two of them
8. over [all the *waqf* property] in his own place and approved their speech and action over [the *waqf* property], together and separately. They accepted that from him [i.e., Nathan] legally and agreed to it
9. in a legal agreement. The aforementioned *raʿīs* forbade anyone from opposing the two of them among the Jews, seeing

²⁵ If Ṣadaqa is a common relative to the two men, then Saʿīd is ʿAbd al-Karīm's uncle, not his grandfather. Alternatively, *jadd* could refer to Muḥadhdhab, Saʿīd's grandfather, in which case he, not Saʿīd, would be the physician.

²⁶ *Khulūw* can refer to building shops on *waqf* land in return for a payment to the *waqf*. See al-Marakeby (2023, 205); my thanks to Alan Elbaum for pointing this out. Thus, *khulūwihi wa-iskānihi* would refer to the property's use for commercial purposes vs. its use for residential purposes.

fit [to do so] for the sake of the *waqf* with regard to prosperity, benefit,

10. and happiness. This was in the presence of Mu'allim Sulaymān [i]bn Yūsuf [i]bn Shamaw'al the Rabbanite Jew, known as Son of the Merchant, and his approval of [all of] this
11. and his authentication of the legal authentication. They were appointed as agents to certify this and to obtain a legal ruling on it on the date 26 Ramaḍān the sacred in the year 9[04] [15 May 1499].

Witnesses, right to left

- 1st Muḥammad ibn 'Abbās al-Mā ... bore witness to that.
- 2nd 'Alī ibn Muḥammad the renter [?] bore witness to that.

Verso: Blank

Plate XXIX: T-S Ar. 51.104, recto. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



DOCUMENT 3: T-S AR. 39.471

A RABBI EN ROUTE TO JERUSALEM, 1615

1.0. Discussion

This badly torn and creased document is a letter, composed in very florid Ottoman Turkish, to an Ottoman official regarding a rabbi (Ottoman Turkish, *hāḥām*) who is travelling to Jerusalem. The document in its present state provides little information about this rabbi, apart from his given name, Samuel (Şemvāl). He may have belonged to one of Cairo's Jewish communities. The letter is dated 20 Şafar 1024 AH/21 March 1615 CE, which corresponds to 20 Adar II 5375 in the Hebrew calendar—i.e., late in the month preceding Nisan, when Passover falls. Thus Samuel was probably hoping to spend Passover in Jerusalem, as Jews from throughout the Ottoman Empire and beyond did each year.

1.1. The Addressee and the Writer

Samuel probably carried this letter with him on his journey. This may explain why the space in line 1 for the official's name and position are left blank, although it is possible they were written in above the line, as was common in this type of letter, and have not survived, since the letter's top margin shows signs of tearing. Perhaps, however, the blank space was deliberate, allowing Samuel to insert the name, or to have the name inserted, of whatever

official he might ask for aid in any locality en route. The letter asks the official to guarantee Samuel's security along his route, lauding the addressee effusively, if rather formulaically, and appealing to his compassion. In line 5, the official is called *ṣāhib-i devlet* (literally, 'possessor of fortune'), which was usually an honorific applied to the grand vizier and provincial governors (see Ch. 2, Doc. 1, recto ll. 8, 10). Thus the intended recipient(s) may be the governors of districts along the overland route between Cairo and Jerusalem. Samuel may therefore have carried several copies of this letter, and the one that found its way to the Genizah may be one that he did not use. This could explain why the name and position of the recipient are not indicated.

Jerusalem in 1615 was part of the Ottoman province of Damascus, which included present-day central and southern Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, as well as Israel/Palestine. While the Ottoman provincial governor, with the title *beylerbeyi*, sat in Damascus, Jerusalem and vicinity were administered by a district governor who held the title *sanjāk beyi*. Since 1603, this office had been held intermittently by Farrūkh Bey, the Circassian mamluk of a governor of Nablus, and later Damascus, and founder of a dynasty that would dominate the district until the late seventeenth century. In 1609, he was appointed governor of Nablus, as well, and administered both districts intermittently, sometimes together, sometimes separately, until his death in 1030 AH/1621 CE. His dynasty appealed to the Ottoman authorities because of his ability to check Bedouin raids (Ze'evi 1996, 40, 43–44, 52–54, 95). He would unquestionably have been a potential recipient of this letter.

As for the writer, he may have been a functionary connected to the governor of Egypt, perhaps even the governor's Jewish *şarrāf*, or banker, although we cannot assume that he was Jewish just because he was a friend of Rabbi Samuel. Regardless, he may have had the necessary command of the Ottoman Turkish language and of Ottoman epistolary style to couch the letter in the extravagant, obsequious idiom appropriate to a request of this nature, or he may have employed a professional scribe. The letter is written entirely in the third person; the addressee is *sultānum*, 'my lord', while the writer is *bu bende-i devlet-ḥ'āhları*, 'this slave the well-wisher'. These features make the text challenging to translate. I have occasionally used first and second person in the interest of comprehensibility while, at the same time, trying to retain the formal, fawning tone of the original.

1.2. The Journey to Jerusalem

Our letter describes Samuel as travelling on foot (*meşyen*), which could conceivably mean that he literally walked to Jerusalem but more probably means that he travelled overland, as opposed to taking a ship from Damietta as far as Gaza or another Palestinian port. The land route would probably have taken him from the Nile Delta across the northern edge of the Sinai Peninsula to Gaza, then on to Jerusalem via Hebron (David 1999, 9, 14, 21–22). Along this route, the chief threat to his security would surely have been attacks by Bedouin. Drought and inflation, two key manifestations in Ottoman lands of the seventeenth-century global crisis, had created unprecedented pressure on regional

Bedouin populations, exacerbating tensions among rival groups and making outbreaks of violence more frequent.²⁷

Even if he did not walk all the way to Jerusalem from Cairo, Samuel certainly did not join a substantial mule or camel caravan travelling the land route to Jerusalem: the organisers of such caravans, which made the trek over the course of some 20 days, hired armed Bedouin escorts to ward off attacks by hostile Bedouin populations (Ze'evi 1996, 10–11). In these circumstances, our letter-writer would probably not have singled Samuel out as needing security. But if Samuel were travelling alone, or with only a small group of companions and assistants, then he may have had to face the Sinai Bedouin without this form of protection. Once through the Sinai and into Ottoman Palestine, meanwhile, he would have had to pay a road tax to residents of the surrounding villages, who partnered with specific Bedouin tribes in the region to provide security along the way to Jerusalem (Ze'evi 1996, 13–14).²⁸ Ordinarily, the Bedouin of the district of Jerusalem helped the governor of Jerusalem to keep order (Ze'evi 1996, 99–102). In 1615, however, these Bedouin were embroiled in a dispute with the Bedouin to the south of the city (Ze'evi 1996, 100–1), making Samuel's progress toward Jerusalem unusually hazardous. Even if he overcame all these obstacles and

²⁷ Ze'evi (1996, 96, 100–1, 107, 113); cf. Faroqhi (1994, 413–42); Pamuk (2001, 75–81); White (2011).

²⁸ Ze'evi (1996, 91–92, 120) notes that *sipāhīs*, cavalry officers who held the revenue assignments known as *tīmārs*, in the district of Jerusalem were required to escort pilgrims to Hebron and Jerusalem but that these services were not always fulfilled.

reached the city, he could not simply pass through one of the gates and proceed to his lodgings. Instead, he would have had to wait outside the gate until the city's *şubaşı* (lit., 'head of the water'), or chief of police—or, alternatively, the head of the Jewish community or his representative—appeared to escort him to his abode. He would have paid a fee for admittance to the city (Ze'evi 1996, 19).

In sum, Samuel's journey presented numerous opportunities—to Bedouin but also to unscrupulous city officials, rogue soldiers and mercenaries, and unsavoury residents of villages and towns—for theft, extortion, violence, and more minor forms of abuse. If the rabbi lacked formal protection, then this letter, and the documents that it requests, may have been the sole means of ensuring his safety and solvency.

2.0. Text

Paper, left margin and upper right corner torn away. 18.00 cm x 23.00 cm.

Recto

1. [Devletl]ü sultānım ḥazretler[inin?]
2. []-i bī-şümār ümīdi olunduḡdan soñra, zamīr-i münīr-i mihr-tenvīr ve ḥatīr-i 'atīr-i Müşterī []
3. //eğer// deryā-yı mürüvvetleri temevvüc ve tefevvüc idüb, cānib-i devlet-ḥ'āhları kıbelinden [su]'āl [buyurılırsa]
4. sultānımın 'ulüvv-i himmet-i 'ālīyeleri berekātiyla şıḥḥat ve 'āfiyet ü[zere?] []

5. Şāhib-i devlet efendimiz ḥazretlerinin ḥāk-ı pāy-ı şeriflerine yüz sürü[b] []
6. reyb ü gümān buyurılmaya. Benim sultānım, ‘ilm-i şerīf-i ‘ālem-ārālarına []
7. Yehūdilerinden olup, ḡadīmī bu bende-i devlet-ḥ’āhınızın dosti olan Ḥāḥām Şemvāl nām Yehūdī []
8. üzere Ḳuds-i Şerīf’e ziyāreti niyetiyle meşyen ‘ale’l-vech ol cāniblere revāne olup, gitmişlerdir. Varaḡa-yı bende-i []
9. vuşūli müyesser olup, yüz sürdükde sultānımın ḡatre-i himmet ve şemme-i şefḡatların mebzūl buyurılıb, üzerine []
10. şefḡatları bī-diriḡ buyurılıb, menāzil ve merāḡilde rencide itmeyüb, maḡall-i maḡşūdına irsāl itmek []
11. temennā ve ricā olunur. Mercūdur ki bu ḡuşuşda zerre-i mürüvvetleri mebzūl buyurıla ve sultānımın luḡf-ı cemīllerinden []
12. zāt-ı melik-şifātlarının şihḡat aḡbārı, ve bu bende-i devlet-ḥ’āhlarına müte‘allıḡ olan ḡizmet-i şerīflerine mektū[b]
13. merḡūblarıyla işāret-i şerīfe buyuralar ki edāsı cāna minnet olup, şihḡat aḡbārınız ‘itt[ilā] []
14. nüzhet ve sürūr ḡaşıl idüḡi muḡarrer ve muḡaḡḡakḡdır. Bāḡī ne taḡrīr olunur ki ‘ilm-i şerīflerine lāḡik olmaya []
15. Müyesser ve muḡaşşal bād. Fī 20 Ş[afar] sene 1024. Şaḡḡ.

Right Margin, Upside-Down

1. Ve mezbûr kulları hakkında
2. Kuds-i Şerîf yollarına hitâben
3. tezkere-yi şerîfleri ‘ināyet buyurılırsa,
4. cānib-i devlet-^hvāhlarına itminān-ı ‘azîme olduğuna
5. iştibāh buyurılmaya. Bāķi mürüvvet şāh lutfundur.

Verso: Blank

3.0. Translation

Recto

1. [To his excellency] my esteemed lord _____
2. After having set numberless hopes on [], the luminous, sun-like conscience and the fragrant, Jupiter-like influence []
3. //if// the sea of [your] munificence were to swell and boil up, causing you to ask how the well-wisher [i.e., the writer] is, [then praise be to God],
4. due to the divine blessings that stem from the loftiness of my lord's favour, I am healthy and vigorous [].
5. I rub my face in the noble dust [beneath the feet] of his excellency the possessor of good fortune [i.e., the official to whom the letter is addressed] [];

6. let there be no doubt or suspicion [about my loyalty and friendship to you]. My lord, [let it not escape] your noble, world-adorning knowledge [that] []
7. one of the [] Jews who has long been this slave the well-wisher's [i.e., the writer's] friend, a Jew named Rabbi Samuel [],
8. desiring to visit holy Jerusalem, to that end has set out on foot [probably meaning 'by land'] for those parts. This letter of the slave [i.e., the writer] []
9. when he arrives and rubs his face [on the ground before you], it is desired and requested that my lord will spend a droplet of his favour and a fraction of his compassion [on Samuel] [].
10. May you not withhold your compassion; may no one harm him on the various stages of his journey, and send [him] to his intended destination [].
11. It is requested that, in this matter, you spend a speck of your generosity and your beautiful munificence []
12. the news of the health of your kingly-virtued self, and the noble services related to this slave the well-wisher [i.e., the writer][]
13. indicate with a [] letter so that carrying out [these services] will be a favour to the soul. Hearing news of your health []

14. is certain and sure to bring pleasure and delight. What remains to be written that might add to your noble knowledge? []
15. Let it [the letter] be successful and received. [Written] on 20 Ş[afar] in the year 1024 [29 March 1615]. Verified.

Right Margin, Upside-Down

1. Concerning the aforementioned servant [of yours],
- 2–3. if you were to grant a noble document addressed to [all the stages] on the road to Jerusalem the noble,
4. have no doubt that it would be a great relief to the well-wisher [i.e., the writer].
5. Munificence is the lord's pleasure.

Verso: Blank

Plate XXX: T-S Ar. 39.471, recto. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



DOCUMENT 4: ENA 3958.10

A LOAN TO THE CHIEF RABBI FROM THE ORPHANS' FUND, 1829

1.0. Discussion

1.1. The Office of Chief Rabbi

ENA 3958.10 is an abbreviated acknowledgement, or *iqrār*,²⁹ dated 1244 AH/1829 CE, of liability for a loan by an official known as Ḥāḥām Başı (Khākhām Bāshi in Arabic). After 1835, this title referred to the Chief Rabbi of Istanbul, who, at least in theory, represented all Jewish subjects of the Ottoman sultan. The title appears sporadically before that date, but its connotations are neither clear nor consistent. In a 1248 AH/1832 CE Genizah document (ENA 3901.3), it seems to refer to a leading rabbinical figure in Cairo. Meanwhile, three documents from the late eighteenth century CE (Ayalon 2017, 332, 347, 353) use the title for a figure with different types of administrative authority among the various Jewish communities of Istanbul.

Even after 1835, the Chief Rabbi's authority remained rather ambiguous. The foundation of the office was part of the overall westernising reforms that the Ottoman Empire undertook during the nineteenth century. The aim was to establish a centrally-

²⁹ Little (1984, 60, 188–89); Khan (1993, 203–7); Tillier and Vanthieghem (2024, 332, 361, 364).

appointed communal leader who would be recognised empire-wide and internationally. Even so, the jurisdiction of this new office was initially limited to the Jews of Istanbul, not all of whom readily accepted it. The Ottoman government appointed separate *Ḥāḥām Başı*, recommended by local communities, in other key cities over the next several years, although Istanbul's *Ḥāḥām* remained technically superior to these others (Levy 2010). Even so, in Egypt, particularly under the rule of the autonomous governor Meḥmed 'Alī Pasha (r. 1220–64 AH/1805–48 CE), Jews tended to look to the foremost rabbis of Cairo and Alexandria for leadership (Landau 1969, 96–100).

These considerations make the identification of the person called Chief Rabbi in this document problematic. The document renders his name *Bārḳār* or *Bārḳāra*. This name is close enough to that of the leading rabbi of Istanbul's Jewish community at the time, Ḥayyim Ya'qov Benyakār, to make it plausible that the figure named in the loan agreement is, in fact, Benyakār, whose name could also be rendered *Bāryakār*, using the Aramaic *bār* instead of the Hebrew *ben* for 'son of'. Benyakār led Istanbul's Jewish community from 1800–35. Curiously, the office of *Ḥāḥām Başı* was officially established in the year of his death; its first holder was Benyakār's successor as leader of Istanbul's Jewish community.

1.2. Character and Language of the Document

ENA 3958.10 is, from all appearances, an abridged summary of a more detailed original. Thus it omits the reason for the document's composition (*wajh taḥririhi*), signifies blessings upon the

Prophet Muḥammad with an anagram, and employs an abbreviated formula to indicate that ‘Bārḳār’ is competent to testify. Meanwhile, no witnesses are listed apart from Bārḳār himself.

It is possible, as well, that the original document was composed in Ottoman Turkish and that the current document represents not simply an abridgement but a partial translation. This could explain why *ghurūsh* is written in the *ṣiyāqāt* script associated with the Ottoman finance ministry in the document’s second line and why Ḥāḥām Başı, ordinarily rendered خاхам باشی or خاхам باشی in documents emanating from the imperial centre, is here rendered خاخم باشه.³⁰ Similarly, the Arabic word *faqat*, ‘only’, seems awkward coming immediately before the amount of the loan in line 4, yet this is exactly where *yalnız* (‘only’ in Turkish) would appear in Turkish-language accounts and receipts (e.g., Öztürk 1996, 362–69, 374–87, 390–91, 394–95).

In contrast, the scribe who wrote our document was almost certainly a native Arabic-speaker. He substitutes ت for ث when rendering the Arabic words for ‘three’ and ‘300’, reflecting colloquial pronunciation throughout the Arab lands. At the same time, his hand is unusual, featuring a stylised *ālīf-lām* ligature and a tendency to write a single *nūn* (ن) in place of the word *min* (من), ‘from’. Based on these features, we might suspect that this document was prepared in a Muslim court in Cairo.

If our document did emanate from Cairo, then Bārḳār’s lender, the merchant (*khwāja*) Elkān Amminadab,³¹ may have

³⁰ In ENA 3901.3, the title is rendered خاхам باشه twice and خاخم باشه once.

³¹ Here rendered امیناداب. The standard Hebrew spelling is עמינדב.

been based there, as well. The guarantor of the loan, Shim‘ūn Fransīs, unquestionably was. Shim‘ūn was the Jewish international merchant, encountered in Ch. 3, Doc. 6, whose company, Karo y Fransīs, had financial dealings throughout the Mediterranean between roughly 1790 and 1830. Shim‘ūn’s ‘mark’ and seal are mentioned in our document but are not visible; presumably, he signed and sealed the unabridged original. A badly smudged Hebrew seal, presumably that of the Chief Rabbi, appears at the lower left, just below Bārkar’s name, which is written in by the scribe. None of these features offers unequivocal evidence of where this abridged agreement was prepared, however. It may have been prepared in Cairo from a longer Turkish original drafted in Istanbul. On the other hand, it may have been drawn up in Istanbul and brought to Cairo by Shim‘ūn Fransīs or one of the other parties.

1.3. The Loan

Our document concerns the repayment of a loan of 15,000 *ghurūsh* that the Chief Rabbi has obtained from Elkān Aminadab. If indeed Bārkar is Ḥayyim Ya‘kov Benyakār, who resided in Istanbul, then these were probably Rūmī *ghurūsh*, a.k.a. piastres, that is, the large silver coins of the Ottoman central lands, each of which was worth forty Egyptian *niṣf fiḍḍa* or *pāras*.³² The document specifies that Bārkar has agreed to repay the loan at the rate of 300 *ghurūsh* per month. At this rate, repayment would stretch out over more than four years.

³² Raymond (1973–74, I:38–39); Pamuk (1994, 966–70; 2000, 159–60); Discussion of Ch. 2, Doc. 5, and Ch. 3, Doc. 6.

This loan comes from ‘the money [or property] of the orphans’ (Arabic, *māl al-yatā’im*). By the terms of the halakhah, as Yaron Ayalon points out, a Jewish child was considered an orphan if his or her father died, regardless of the mother’s status. Jewish courts were at pains to appoint guardians for such ‘orphans’ so that they would not have to rely on the community charitable fund (*kupa*) for orphans (Goitein 1978, 277–92, 302–312; Ayalon 2014, 71–72). (A guardian in this case could be the mother’s second husband or another male family member.) *Māl al-yatā’im* probably refers to such a fund for orphaned Jewish children, whether in Istanbul or in Cairo.

In these circumstances, two scenarios are possible. First, the Chief Rabbi may have been trading with the orphans’ money and/or property in order to raise additional income for the fund. This was a recognised practice, documented in the medieval Genizah and in the responsa of Abraham Maimonides (582–635 AH/1186–1237 CE) (Goitein 1967, 255, 464 n. 158). Since the profits were earmarked for a charitable concern, they were not considered anti-halakhic interest on the loan. But in such a case, the Chief Rabbi would probably be lending the orphans’ money to Elkān or some other merchant to trade rather than borrowing it himself.

A more likely scenario is that this is a forced loan. In that case, Elkān would probably be the superintendent of the orphans’ fund, and the Chief Rabbi would be insisting on using the money for his own expenses, whether connected with his office or otherwise. Alternatively, he may have intended to trade with the funds and use the profits for his own ends. Similar uses of Muslim

orphans' funds in early Islamic and medieval Egypt have been documented by Evan M. Metzger.³³ Nonetheless, the risk of taking such action with community charitable funds made a guarantor such as Shimʿūn Fransīs indispensable.

2.0. Text

Paper, hole at bottom centre. 127.00 mm x 219.00 mm.

Recto

- | | |
|---|----|
| غروش | 1 |
| [<i>ghurūsh</i> in <i>ṣiyāqāt</i> script] | 2 |
| ١٥٠٠٠ | 3 |
| فقط خمست عشر الف غرش لا غير | 4 |
| وجه تحريره | 5 |
| ص[ا] وله... لما كان يوم الاربع المبارك في ثلاثة وعشرين خلت من شهر | 6 |
| رجب الفرد سنة ١٢٤٤ اربعة واربعين ومياتين والى اقر واعترف | 7 |
| واشهد على نفسه دون غيره وهو بكامل الاوصاف الشرعية خاخم باشه | 8 |
| باركاره ان عنده وفي ذمته بحقاً صحيحاً شرعي ما هو قرضه الى الخواجة | 9 |
| الكان امين اذاب من مال اليتايم مبلغاً وقدره خمست عشر الف غرش | 10 |
| المرقومة اعلاه الذي نصفها... سبعة الاف وخمسمائت | 11 |
| غرش وقد انذر على نفسه لله تعالى خاخم باشه المذكور ما دام هذا | 12 |

³³ Metzger (2023, 175–76, 186, 202, 221–25, 233–35, 236–43, 246, 263, 281–83, 287–89, 298–99, 303–5, 313–15).

- 13 المبلغ يرتب في ذمته يدفع كل شهر يمضا من تاريخه تلتماية غرش الى
- 14 الخواجة الكان ويقوم خاخم باشه المذكور بدفع المبلغ مع النذر
- 15 المذكور يناحب ويطار[؟] للخواجة الكان وضامن بذلك المبلغ
- 16 المذكور مع النذر المذكور الخواجة شمعون فرنسيس الواضع خطه
- 17 وختم فيه تمسكا صحيحا شرعيا باجبه وقبول من غير اكراه ولا اجبار
- 18 واختمه واخطه حجة فيه والله تعالى خير الشاهدين

Affirmation

- 1 المقر بما فيه [؟] صحيح
- 2 خاخم باشه باركار
- 3 في ٢٣ ب سنة ١٢٤٤

[Additional words are obscured by a large hole in the document.]

A badly smudged seal in Hebrew, thus probably Bārkar's.

Verso: Blank

3.0. Textual Notes

Recto

5. وجه تحريره the reason for the document's composition: The background information that would have been included in a longer original loan agreement is not included here even though the formula وجه التحرير is retained.

6. صلى الله على محمد النبي واله وسلم [ا] وله is an abbreviation for
6. ثلاثة 'three': This word is spelled as it would be pronounced colloquially. Literary Arabic would be ثلاثة.
6. من شهر 'of the month': The م in من is not written (here or elsewhere in the document), and the ر in شهر is cut off.
7. رجب الفرد 'Rajab the solitary': This refers to the fact that of the four traditionally sacred months in the Islamic calendar, Rajab is separated from the other three (Dhū'l-Qa'da, Dhū'l-Hijja, and Muḥarram), which are consecutive.
8. بكامل الاوصاف الشرعية 'completely fitting the legal description [of a legitimate testifier, or *muqirr*]: This is apparently shorthand for the list of attributes found in legal agreements and contracts: health, well-being, free will, etc. See Ch. 1, Doc. 1, recto l. 7; Ch. 4, Doc. 2, recto l. 3; Ch. 5, Doc. 1, recto l. 14.
- 10, 12. غرش: Here the singular, غرش, is used instead of the plural غروش.
11. نصفها... 'half of it...': The next two words are scrawled over, as is the following سبعة, probably indicating that the nib of the scribe's pen foundered.
11. نصفها...سبعة الاف وخمسمائت 'half of it...is 7,500': Half of an amount owed, or of an agreed-upon price, was customarily specified in legal documents 'to obviate error and discourage forgery' (Little 1984, 276). Note also the unorthodox spelling مائت for مائة, which is usually rendered مائة in these documents.

13. تلتماية '300': This word is spelled as it would be pronounced colloquially. Literary Arabic would be ثلاثمائة.
15. ويطار 'and promotes': This would assume that the scribe second-guessed himself when he was about to write خطر 'bets' or 'pendulum'.
17. باجبه: This seems to be a slight scribal error, again possibly connected to pen problems, for ايجاب, 'acceptance'.

4.0. Translation

Recto

1. *ghurūsh*
2. [*ghurūsh* in *ṣiyāqāt* script]
3. 15,000
4. Only fifteen thousand *ghurūsh*, nothing else.
5. The reason for its [the document's] composition:
6. Prayers for the Prophet. On blessed Wednesday on the twenty-third of the month
7. of Rajab the solitary in the year 1244, twelve hundred and forty-four [28 January 1829], the Chief Rabbi Bārkāra [sic] acknowledged and recognised
8. and witnessed for himself, no one else, completely fitting the legal description [of a legitimate testifier],
9. that he owed and had in his possession, by proper legal right, what he owed to the merchant

10. Elkān Amīnādhāb from the property of the orphans, an amount totalling the 15,000 *ghurūsh*
11. mentioned above, half of which [next two words scrawled over] is 7,500
12. *ghurūsh*. The aforementioned Chief Rabbi took a vow upon himself to God the exalted that as long as this
13. amount is in his possession, he will pay every month that passes, beginning on this day, 300 *ghurūsh* to
14. the merchant Elkān. The aforementioned Chief Rabbi undertakes to pay the amount, per the aforementioned vow,
15. which he fulfils and promotes [?] to the merchant Elkān. The guarantor of that aforementioned amount
16. with the aforementioned vow is the merchant Shimʿūn Fransī, who has affixed his mark
17. and sealed it—a proper, legal receipt, with affirmation and acceptance and no constraint or coercion.
18. And I seal it and sign it as proof of it, and God the exalted is the best of witnesses.

Affirmation

1. Affirming that what is in it [? the document] is valid.
 2. Chief Rabbi Bārķār,
 3. on 23 [Raja]b of the year 1244 [28 January 1829]
- [Additional words are obscured by a large hole in the document.]
- A badly smudged seal in Hebrew, thus probably Bārķār's.

Verso: Blank

5. DOCUMENTS FROM THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY (?)

On the face of it, these six documents have nothing directly to do with Egypt's Jewish community but instead concern Muslims exclusively. The first one, a Muslim marriage contract, may not even come from an Egyptian genizah. The remaining five, however, could conceivably have some connection to Egypt's Jewish community, and not simply because they somehow found their way to the Genizah. The bare-bones *‘ilm-i ḥāl* manuscript (Docs 2–3) is the sort of primer that converts to Islam might well have used. The commercial letters (Docs 4–5) and the Sufi poems (Doc. 6), meanwhile, could reflect the links between the Ottoman Empire's major Sufi orders, particularly the Mevlevī, popularly known in the West as ‘whirling dervishes’, and the empire's Jewish population. A not insignificant number of converts to Islam, Jewish and otherwise, found Sufism a compatible path into the new faith. Moreover, the ties between certain orders—above all the Mevlevī and Bektāshī—and Ottoman military personnel meant that Jewish merchants who cultivated ties to Janissaries and other soldiers,¹ either in the province or in the imperial capital, might also become acquainted with Sufis and their practices.

¹ Such as those mentioned in three of the previous four chapters (Ch. 1, Docs 2–3; Ch. 2, Docs 1–2; Ch. 3, Docs 2–4).

In the final analysis, we simply cannot know whether the presence of these documents in the Genizah attests to Jewish conversion to Islam or close Jewish ties to Sufis, or whether these documents ended up in the Genizah through random accidents. Nonetheless, the reality of Jewish–Janissary, if not Jewish–Sufi, ties in Ottoman Egypt, makes the content of at least some of these documents somewhat suggestive. Similarly suggestive is the fact of increasing Jewish conversion to Islam in the Ottoman Empire beginning in the late seventeenth century, not least because of the widespread movement of the messianic figure Sabbatai Sevi.² If, on the other hand, none of these documents has any connection to Egypt’s Jewish community, then collectively, the documents serve as evidence that the Genizah and related collections, such as Manchester’s Gaster collection, include numerous documents from the Muslim community.

² Scholem (1973, 777–81, 793–802); Goldish (2004, 162–66); Baer (2010, 3–21); Hacker (2017, 842).

DOCUMENT 1: MANCHESTER G 63

A MUSLIM MARRIAGE CONTRACT, 1594

1.0. Discussion

1.1. A Maghribī Marriage?

This *shariʿa* court document resembles a marriage contract, though in much-abbreviated form. Dated 29 Dhū'l-Ḥijja 1002 (15 September 1594), it is written in rather runny brown ink, now badly faded, and in a Maghribī hand that features several oddly-formed letters, notably ۛ and ۛ. It may have been drawn up in North Africa and later transported to Cairo, or it may have been acquired in North Africa. In that case, the judge probably belonged to the Mālikī legal rite. This affiliation would have had little effect on this marriage itself but would have facilitated the wife's ability to initiate a 'ransom', or *khulʿ*, divorce³ while making it more difficult for the husband to repudiate his wife in the type of divorce known as *ṭalāq*.⁴ As in most marriages adjudicated by non-Ḥanafī Muslim courts, the bride was not present for the

³ Zilfi (1997); Rapoport (2005, 65, 72–74, 84–87, 95, 98); Tucker (2008, 95–100); Hallaq (2009, 189, 191–93, 283–86).

⁴ Zilfi (1997, 269–70); Rapoport (2005, 66, 69–72, 84–85, 87, 89, 93–94, 97–98, 106); Tucker (2008, 86–92); Hallaq (2009, 190–91, 193, 263, 280–84, 286).

ratification of the marriage contract but was instead represented by her ‘guardian’ (*walī*), usually her father, as here.⁵

The couple are ‘Alī ibn Ḥadwā (‘the north wind’, or Boreas)⁶ and al-Zahrā’ (‘the most radiant’) bint Aḥmad. They are certainly Muslim, though ‘Alī and Zahrā’ are also attested as Jewish names in the ‘classical’ Genizah. ‘Alī is a cognate of the Hebrew Eli, the most common male name in the medieval Genizah.⁷ The bridegroom carries the *nisba* Madyūnī, probably referring to the town of Madyūna (Mediouna) in either northern Algeria or northwestern Morocco. Intriguingly, however, Madyūna also refers to an Amazigh (Berber) tribe in western Algeria that converted from Judaism to Islam in the ninth century CE, as well as an Amazigh tribe in the vicinity of Fez, Morocco, that abandoned Judaism to embrace the Kharijite sect of Islam sometime after the Arab conquest of Morocco in the seventh century (Corcos 2007; Corcos and Laskier 2007).⁸ Even if our couple had distant roots in one of these communities, however, they would probably not have been aware of them except perhaps as quasi-mythical family traditions.

⁵ Tucker (2008, 31, 166–67); Hallaq (2009, 274); Tillier and Vanthieghem (2024, 349–50, 412, 436–38, 443–45).

⁶ This seems more likely than a variation on حذاء, ‘camel-driver’, in which case one would expect the word to carry a definite article.

⁷ Goitein (1967, 357); Princeton Geniza Lab, Goitein’s Index Cards, 1188–1189, 4208–4241.

⁸ There is also a Qusaybat Madyūn in Tunisia, on the Mediterranean coast southeast of Tunis.

1.2. The Dower and Its Payment

In a typical Muslim (or Jewish) marriage in the pre-modern Middle East, the husband provided his new wife with a dower, usually called *ṣadāq* or *mahr*.⁹ Here, the dower, called *ṣadāq*, totals 20 dinars, that is, gold coins. These are probably either Ottoman gold *ṣerīfis*—minted in all Ottoman Arab provinces, as well as southeastern Anatolia, after the Ottoman conquest as a provincial equivalent of the imperial gold *sulṭānī*¹⁰—or gold dinars of the Saʿadian dynasty, which ruled most of modern-day Morocco from 1549–1659 (Abun-Nasr 1987, 206–27; Numista). A dower in dinars may well have been a hedge against the debasement of silver coinage and related galloping inflation that plagued the Mediterranean region in the late sixteenth century, hallmarks of the burgeoning global economic crisis (Barkan 1975, 8–22; Hathaway 2020, 60–62). In 1586, a *ṣerīfī* was worth roughly 48 *niṣf fiḍḍa*, the silver coin used in most fiscal transactions in Ottoman Egypt; ten years later, it was worth 88 (Pamuk 1994, 962–63, calculating 2.5 *akçes* per 1 *niṣf fiḍḍa*).

As early as the ninth century CE, the custom had emerged of the groom paying his bride a portion of the dower, often half,

⁹ Rapoport (2005, 12–13, 30, 52–59, 61, 65–68); Tucker (2008, 43–44, 46–50, 80, 137–38, 152–53, 163–64); Hallaq (2009, 32, 190–92, 277, 312, 461); Tillier and Vanthieghem (2024, 333, 338–40, 342–47, 385–401, 422–25, and 23–285 *passim* for document examples). Tillier and Vanthieghem (2024, 342) note that the Mālikī and, to some degree, the Shāfiʿī rite preferred the word *ṣadāq* while the Ḥanafī favoured *mahr*.

¹⁰ Raymond (1973–74, I:28); Pamuk (1994, II:954–55; 2000, 99); Ch. 2, Doc. 1, Textual Notes.

at the time of marriage, and paying the remainder out over a set period of months or years. By the Mamluk era, this period often exceeded a decade, and Yossef Rapoport points out that many Mamluk-era brides never received the full amounts of their dowers.¹¹ In theory, at least, the wife was entitled to the entire delayed portion if her husband died or divorced her (Tucker 2008, 47, 153; Hallaq 2009, 190, 191–92).¹² In our contract, the 20 dinars is to be paid in instalments of one dinar per year. At this rate, obviously, payment in full would require 20 years, by which time the marriage might be dissolved or one or both of the spouses might be dead. The language of the contract implies, however, that the groom is liable for the full amount regardless.

In addition to the 20 dinars, ‘Alī pledges to give his wife an enslaved woman; the term used, *āma*, connotes a domestic servant, as opposed to a concubine. During the medieval period, domestic slaves rarely comprised part of the groom’s dower, except in the case of fabulously wealthy grooms belonging to the ruling elite; they were more likely to be part of the bride’s trousseau, provided by her parents.¹³ However, they seem to have become relatively common components of the dower, at least among the well-to-do, by the eighteenth century, if not earlier (Zilfi 1997,

¹¹ Rapoport (2005, 54–55, 67–68); Tucker (2008, 47, 153); Hallaq (2009, 277); Tillier and Vanthieghem (2024, 344–47, 391–99).

¹² In the case of *khul’* divorce, the wife usually forfeited the delayed portion in exchange for divorce: Zilfi (1997, 273, 276–77, 279, 282, 284).

¹³ Krakowski (2018, 143–44); Tillier and Vanthieghem (2024, 391, 399, 427, 432).

279; Tucker 2008, 153). This woman's value is measured not in dinars but in a currency that, unfortunately, is largely obscured by a crease and a tear in the paper on which the contract is written. Since the word is quite short and appears to begin with ف, we may hazard the guess that it is (*niṣf*) *fiḍḍa*, the Egyptian silver coin. If so, then this enslaved woman is worth between roughly a quarter and a half of a dinar, or between 1.25% and 2.5% of the rest of al-Zahrā's dower.

1.3. An Unusual Service Requirement

A final unusual feature of this document is that following the date but before the witnesses' signatures, the scribe notes an addendum to the contract by Aḥmad, al-Zahrā's father, who requires the enslaved woman to serve 'Alī's brother Qadūr for the duration of the marriage. The document provides no clue as to why Aḥmad would introduce this condition. After all, 'Alī, not his father-in-law, was providing the slave. Perhaps Aḥmad wanted to remove the slave from his daughter's household so that 'Alī would not be tempted to make her his sexual partner. Alternatively, perhaps Qadūr lived in 'Alī's house, and Aḥmad wanted to make sure that Qadūr did not exploit al-Zahrā's labor.

1.4. An Unrelated Verso

The document's verso is blank except for what appear to be several practice lines of *Bismillah al-raḥman al-raḥīm* ('In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate')—one of them positioned vertically down the lower left margin of the page—in a rather halting hand, quite different from that of the scribe who

recorded the marriage contract on the recto, and in a different ink. This is one of the very few instances of an Ottoman-era Genizah document—or, at least, a document that is catalogued as a Genizah document, even if it originated outside Egypt—being reused as scrap paper.

2.0. Text¹⁴

Paper, some tearing at middle and bottom left. 28.005 cm x 17.311 cm.

Recto

Top

Illegible seal, probably that of the *qāḍī*.

Main Text

- | | |
|---|---|
| الحمد لله رب العالمين والعاقبة للمتقين وصلى الله على سيدنا | 1 |
| محمد وعلى اله الطيبين الطاهرين اما بعد فقد تزوج على بركة الله | 2 |
| تعالى وتوفيقه وعلى منهاج الشرع الواضح وطريقه المكرم | 3 |
| علي بن حدوا المديوني البكر المباركة الزهراء بنت احمد | 4 |
| من النسب المذكور بصداق مبارك نقده عشرون دينار[1] | 5 |

¹⁴ For the standard format of pre-modern Muslim marriage contracts, see Tillier and Vanthieghem (2024, 337–56). My sincere thanks, as well, to Professor Naïm Vanthieghem for reviewing this document and suggesting possible readings for several particularly thorny passages.

- 6 ذهبنا عينا سكية التاريخ وكالية مثل عين النقد مياة [؟]
- 7 وعدد منجم لها عليه بحساب دينارا واحدا [ا] خر كل عام يمر
- 8 عليه من تاريخه الى تمامه ان شاء الله والى ذلك امة
- 9 واحدة قيمتها عشرون ف [ضة؟] لها عليه لتمام اربعة
- 10 اعوام من الان لا براءة له من ذلك الا بالواجب انكحه اياها
- 11 والدها المذكور بما ملكه الله من امرها وجعل له من العقد عليها
- 12 حل للنكاح خلو من موانعه قبله الزوج المذكور وارتضا
- 13 وعلى نفسه اوجب حكمه وامهال عارفا قدره شهد
- 14 على الزو[ج] والولي بما فيه عنهما وهما بالاحوال الجائزة وعرفا بهذا
- 15 بتاريخ تاسع عشرين الحجة الحرام اثنين بعد الف
- 16 وبعد تمام العقد الزمها والدها بخدمة اخو الزوج المذكور
- 17 وهو قدور[؟] طول الزوجية بينهما انتهى به بعد ال...

Witnesses, right to left

[The ornate first signature is illegible, but the signer is clearly the scribe of the document; he uses the same ink to write his witness statement.]

1 شهد بذلك [؟]

2 احمد

3 ب [ن؟] []

1 علي []

Verso (top)

Repeated partial and complete practice lines of *بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم*, plus one vertically at lower left.

3.0. Textual Notes

Recto

10. لا براءة له من ذلك ‘there is no release for him from that’: For the term *barā’a* in this sense, see Tillier and Vanthieghem (2024, 392).
14. وهما بالاحوال الجايذة ‘both of them being in a state of competence’: This is a much-abbreviated version of the standard list of attributes found in legal agreements and contracts: health, well-being, free will, etc. (See Ch. 1, Doc. 1, recto l. 7; Ch. 4, Doc. 2, recto l. 3; Ch. 4, Doc. 4, recto l. 8.)

4.0. Translation

Recto

Top

Illegible seal, probably that of the *qāḍī*

Main Text

1. Praise to God, lord of the universe. The (best) outcome is for the pious. May God bless our master

2. Muḥammad and his family, the good and the pure. Now then: ‘Alī [i]bn Ḥadwā al-Madyūnī married, by the blessing of God
3. the exalted, and by his granting of success, by the way of the clear law and by its noble path,
4. the blessed virgin al-Zahrā’ bint Aḥmad
5. of the aforementioned lineage [i.e., Madyūnī], with a blessed dower in the amount of 20 dinars
6. in gold specie, current coins, trustworthy [?] just like ready cash: one hundred [?].
7. The number of instalments that he is obligated to pay her is one dinar at the end of each year that passes,
8. from the present date until the completion [of the payment], God willing, and in addition to that one female slave
9. whose value is 20 *f[iddas?]*; he is obligated to [give] her [the slave] by the end of four
10. years from now. There is no release from that for him except through [fulfilling] his obligation. Her [al-Zahrā’s] aforementioned father gave her to him in marriage
11. inasmuch as God has given him power over her, and he [the father] has placed him [the groom], by way of contract, over her,
12. licit for marriage, free from any of its impediments. The aforementioned groom accepted this and consented

13. and took upon himself the obligation of the [lit., 'its'] ruling and its delayed [payment], acknowledging the amount of it. Witness was borne,
14. regarding the groo[m] and the guardian [i.e., the bride's father], regarding what is in this regarding the two of them, both of them being in a state of competence. They both acknowledged this
15. on the date 29 Dhū'l-Ḥijja 1002 [15 September 1594].
16. After the completion of the contract, her [al-Zahrā's] father required her [the slave] to serve the brother of the aforementioned groom,
17. who is called Qadūr, for the duration of their marriage. [The obligation] ends after [divorce or death?].

Witnesses, right to left

1st [The ornate first signature is illegible, but the signer is clearly the scribe of the document; he uses the same ink to write his witness statement.]

2nd Aḥmad [i]b[n?] [] bore witness to that. []

3rd 'Alī []

Verso (top)

Repeated partial and complete practice lines of 'In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate', plus one vertically at lower left.

DOCUMENTS 2–3: T-S AR. 39.153 AND T-S NS 297.51

A PRIMER ON ISLAMIC PRACTICE, 16TH CENTURY (?)

1.0. Discussion

1.1. Works of *‘İlm-i Ḥāl*

These two undated documents appear to comprise different sections of a single work of *‘İlm-i ḥāl* (Arabic, *‘ilm al-ḥāl*), a ‘primer’ of Muslim practice, written in simple Turkish, for converts to Islam, as well as long-time Muslims who might not be thoroughly versed in accepted Muslim practice, such as women, young people, isolated rural populations, and soldiers (Arpaguş 2002). (Soldiers, of course, could include recent converts, notably mamluks and those recruited through the *devshirme*, the distinctive Ottoman practice of ‘collecting’ youths from among the empire’s rural Christian subjects in the Balkans and Anatolia.) A wave of new works in this genre appeared during the reign of Sultan Süleymān I (‘the Magnificent’, r. 926–74 AH/1520–66 CE), forming a key feature of what some scholars call the ‘era of confessionalisation’ in the Ottoman Empire: a period when Ottoman religious and political authorities emphasised the empire’s Sunni Muslim identity against its major geopolitical rivals, the Roman Catholic Habsburg Empire and the Twelver Shi‘ite Safavid Empire of Iran

(Terzioğlu 2013; Krstić 2019). Several of these works became and remained authoritative. One, *‘Imādū’l-İslām*, composed around 1543, on the basis of an earlier Persian work, by the Anatolian Ḥanafī scholar ‘Abd al-Raḥman ibn Yūsuf al-Akṣarayī, about whom little is otherwise known, is the most popular example of the genre in Turkey today, albeit in a simplified form entitled *Büyük İslam İlmihali* (Big [or Great] Islam *‘İlm-i Ḥāl*).¹⁵ Two figures associated with the puritanical Kāḏızādeli movement of the seventeenth century produced influential works of *‘ilm-i ḥāl* under the title *Risāle*, or ‘Treatise’. The *Risāle*, also known as the *Vaṣīyetnāme*, of the conservative Anatolian mystic Birgevī Meḥmed Efendi (929-81 AH/1523–73 CE), who was the movement’s spiritual inspiration, was composed in simple Turkish like that of our documents. It became wildly popular among rank-and-file soldiers throughout the empire (Birgevī, *Risāle*). Decades later, the Kāḏızādeli leader Üstüvānī Meḥmed Efendi (1017–72 AH/1608–61 CE), a native of Damascus, authored a similar *Risāle* that incorporates numerous references to seminal authorities of the Ḥanafī legal rite of Sunni Islam (Üstüvānī, *Risāle*; Yurdaydın 1962).¹⁶

¹⁵ al-Akṣarayī (*‘Imādū’l-İslām*); Arpaguş (2000; 2014); Krstić (2019, 68–69). This ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Akṣarayī is no relation to the Hanbalī judge in Ch. 1, Doc. 1, as noted in the discussion of that document. The Persian prototype is ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Fārisī’s *Umdat al-Islām*.

¹⁶ Several chapters seem to be missing from the copy of this work listed in the Bibliography, and the last several pages are from another work.

1.2. The Nature of These Documents

These two Genizah documents, however, do not seem to constitute wholesale reproductions of sections of any of these well-known *‘ilm-i ḥāl* works. The language of the sections of T-S Ar. 39.153 dealing with prayer is quite similar to that of the ‘Rules of Prayer’ (*Şurūt-i şalāt*) section of Üstüvānī’s *Risāle*; however, the Genizah document lacks any references or allusions to religious authorities. Most well-known *‘ilm-i ḥāl* works, in contrast, incorporate numerous references to authoritative treatises on *fiqh*, or Islamic jurisprudence.¹⁷ Those lacking this critical apparatus are often composed in the form of questions and answers or poems,¹⁸ but the Genizah text, despite its symmetrical arrangement on the pages, consists of declarative prose. Linguistically, the obvious difference between the Genizah *‘ilm-i ḥāl* and these well-known Ottoman Turkish examples is that these popular specimens use the form *secd-i sehiv* for ‘invalidation of prayer’ while the Genizah document uses *sehv-i secde*. This may indicate that the Genizah documents draw on a different, perhaps little-known, work of *‘ilm-i ḥāl*. On the other hand, the author, or at least the calligrapher, may have stripped out the practical guidelines from one or more of these better-known, more elaborate works.

¹⁷ Üstüvānī’s *Risāle*, for example, repeatedly cites the legal works of Ib-rāhīm al-Ḥalabī (d. 956 AH/1549 CE), Burḥān al-Dīn al-Marghinānī (530–93 AH/1135–97 CE), and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Farghānī, a.k.a. Kāḍīḥān (d. 592 AH/1196 CE).

¹⁸ Krstić (2017, 296–314, esp. 299, 301–7; 2019, 69–70, 80–81); İşler (2020).

The four folios of T-S Ar. 39.153 form a partial ‘pamphlet’ on two subjects common to this genre: (1) *ṣurūṭ-i ṣalāt* (Arabic, *shurūṭ al-ṣalāt*), ‘rules of prayer’, and more specifically what errors in practice invalidate prayer, and (2) *elfāḫ-i küfr* (Arabic, *alfāḫ al-kufr*), the utterances, whether intentional or accidental, that throw one into unbelief. As Tijana Krstić points out (2019, 84), inclusion of *elfāḫ-i küfr* in *‘ilm-i ḥāl* works appears to be an innovation of the Süleymanic era; thus, this Genizah document must date from that period or later. In addition, such a lengthy and elaborate list of *elfāḫ* marks this work as a product of the Ḥanafī legal rite, the Ottoman Empire’s official rite (Krstić 2019, 84–85). T-S NS 297.51’s single folio seems to comprise part of the closing material of this work.

The text is written calligraphically within thin red rule-borders, with generous spacing between lines, simple red roundels between words, and full vocalisation. Each right-hand page bears the first word of the following page in the lower left corner. The work may be aimed at non-native Turkish speakers and/or at the newly literate in Ottoman Turkish. If so, then the manual reflects, and arguably addresses, the language barrier between the mass of Egypt’s Arabophone population, regardless of creed, and the Turcophone Ottoman administration, including both government officials and soldiery. The large, clear hand would also facilitate reading the work aloud to a group.

These folios are clearly designed to form part of a book, or at least a booklet. Given the numerous topics treated in most *‘ilm-i ḥāl* works—ablution, fasting, pilgrimage, basic tenets of faith, and so on—we can perhaps assume that a large number of pages

have not survived or, alternatively, that this booklet covers only select subjects related to Muslim faith and practice—although the closing words imply that it covers a broader range of topics. Perforations in the centre margin show that the pages were once bound together while slight tears along the bottom margins of several folios suggest that the book was well-used. Water stains at the top of several folios of T-S Ar. 39.153 and darker stains at the bottom of both the recto and the verso of T-S NS 297.51 may have come from users or may have occurred after the booklet was dismantled. Each folio measures 19 cm x 26.40 cm; thus the book would have measured 19 cm x 13.20 cm: a rather small book, in other words, that could easily be held in the hands or passed from hand to hand. It could have been used as easily for group study as for solitary scrutiny.

1.3. A Work for Converts?

As to why a work of *‘ilm-i ḥāl* should fetch up in the Genizah, conversion to Islam among Cairo’s Jewish population would seem the obvious explanation. The Turcophone, Ḥanafī character of the work indicates that in this case, conversion was mediated in some way by Ottoman officialdom. This *‘ilm-i ḥāl* may have been commissioned by a converted Jew who had obtained a position in the Ottoman provincial administration and thus needed to hone his Ottoman Turkish, in addition to solidifying his grasp of normative Sunni, Ḥanafī practice. The fact that the bulk of the surviving manuscript concerns prayer makes sense in this context, for the five daily prayers are the most frequently occurring

public rite, as well as one of the most publicly visible. Our hypothetical convert may conceivably have used the manual to instruct his entire family or other converts in his community. In the absence of any clues to the manuscript's date, provenance, or ownership, we can only speculate.

2.0. Texts

Paper. 19.00 cm x 26.40 cm.

2.1. T-S Ar. 39.153

[pages missing]

Shurūt al-ṣalāt Section

Page 1: Folio 2r, left side

1. Ḳur'ān okumadan rukū'
2. itse, tekrār dönüb,
3. Ḳur'ān okuya ve yine
4. rukū' ide şoñra
5. sehv-i secde ide.
6. Farzda ikinci rek'atda
7. taḥiyyātdan artık 'Allahümme

Page 2: Folio 2v, right side

1. şalli 'ala Muḥammed'
2. dimeği öte geçse

3. sehv-i secde ide.
4. Rukū‘ iki itse,
5. sehv-i secde ide.
6. Cehriyle okunmayacak
7. yerde bir āyet miqdārı

Bottom left: okusa

Page 3: Folio 3r, left side

1. okusa, sehv-i secde
2. ide. İkinci rek‘atda
3. oturmasa, sehv-i secde
4. ide. Taḥiyyāt okumağı
5. unutsa, gerek cümlesini,
6. gerek birazını, gerek
7. evvelki taḥiyyātta ve gerek

Page 4: Folio 3v, right side

1. āḥir қа‘dede sehv-i
2. secde ide. Vitir’de
3. kunūt du‘āsını unutsa,
4. sehv-i secde ide.
5. Dört rek‘at olan
6. farzlarda iki evvelki
7. rek‘atında Fātiḥayı ve

Bottom left: sūreyi

Page 5: Folio 4r, left side

1. sūreyi ma'en terk
2. eyleyüb, iki āhır
3. rek'atında Fātiḥayı ve sūreyi
4. kazā itse, yine
5. sehv-i secde ide.
6. Herkaṅğı namāz olursa,
7. iki evvelki rek'atında

Page 6: Folio 4v, right side

1. Fātiḥa'yı ya sūreyi terk
2. eylese, sehv-i secde
3. ide. Fātiḥa'yı bir rek'atda
4. biri biri ardınca
5. iki kerre okusa,
6. sehv-i secde ide.
7. Secdeyi üç itse

Bottom left: sehv

Page 7: Folio 1r, left side

1. sehv-i secde ide.
2. Fātiḥa'dan şoñra bir miqdār

3. eġlense, 'kaṅı süreyi
4. okusam' deyü, sehv-i
5. secde ide. Bir secdeyi
6. terk eylese, soñra
7. hātırına gelüb, każā

Page 8: Folio 1v, right side

1. eylese, sehv-i secde
2. ide. Fātiḥa'dan evvel
3. okusa sürenin ba'zısını
4. ya bir ḥarfini sehv-i secde
5. ide. Farzda evvelki
6. oturmada oturmadıysa
7. sehv-i secde ide.

Bottom left: ayak

Page 9: Folio 1v, left side

1. Ayak üzere tırmağı
2. ya rukū'ı ya iki secdeyi
3. terk eylese, namāz
4. içinde ya selām 'aḫabince
5. hātırına gelse, bir rek'at
6. daḥi kılub, sehv-i
7. secde ide. Rukū'ı

Page 10: Folio 1r, right side

1. ya secdeyi unutsa, taḥiyyātdan
2. şöñra ḥātırına gelse,
3. ol secdeyi ya rukūʿı
4. ide, yine tekrār
5. taḥiyyāt okuya sehv-i
6. secde ide. Ezberlemek
7. bu mes'eleleri lāzımdır.

Bottom left: ve daḥi

Alfāḫ al-kufr Section

Page 11: Folio 4v, left side

1. [in red ink] Ve daḥi imānsız gitmenin
2. sebepleri yiğirmi yedidir.
3. Evveli yaramaz i'tikād.
4. İkinci za'f imān.
5. Üçüncü tokuz a'zāda
6. toğrulukdan çıkmak. Dördüncü
7. günāha muşırır olmak.

Page 12: Folio 4r, right side

1. Beşinci ni'met-i İslām'a
2. şükri terk etmek.

3. Altıncı imānsız gitmeden
4. korkmamak. Yedinci nā-ḥaḳḳ
5. yere zulüm etmek.
6. Sekizinci sünnet üzere
7. okunan ezāna icābet

Bottom left: etmemek

Page 13: Folio 3v, left side

1. etmemek. Toḳuzuncı anasına
2. ve bābāsına şer'e muḥālif
3. olmayan yerde sözlerin
4. tutmamak. Onuncı çok
5. yemîn etmek. On
6. birinci namāzda beş
7. yerde ta'dîl-i erkânı

Page 14: Folio 3r, right side

1. terk etmek. On
2. ikinci namāzında tehāvün
3. ya'nî kolayşınub alcaḳ
4. iş gibi tutmak.
5. On üçüncü şarāb
6. içmek. On dördüncü
7. Müslimānlara ezā etmek.

Bottom left: on

Page 15: Folio 2v, left side

1. On beşinci yalan
2. yere evliyālîk şatmak.
3. On altıncı günāhını
4. unutmak. On yedinci
5. kendüyi begenmek. On
6. sekizinci ‘amelini çok
7. bilmek. On toközuncı

Page 16: Folio 2r, right side

1. kovuculuk etmek. Yiğirminci
2. hāsed etmek. Yiğirmi
3. birinci üstāzına şer‘e
4. muhālîf olmayan yerde
5. muhālefet etmek. Yiğirmi
6. ikinci bir ādamı tecrîbe
7. etmeden ‘ayü’ demek

Bottom left: yiğirmi [üçüncü]

[pages missing]

2.2. T-S NS 297.51

Concluding Section

[pages missing]

Page 1: Folio 1r, left side

1. aṣlā fā'ide virmese
2. gerekdir. Hāl-i ḥayātda
3. iken tedārik itmek
4. gerek idin dirler.
5. İmdi [in red ink] ey mü'min
6. qarındaş, bu fakîrin aňladuđı
7. oldur-ki Kıyāmet Günü

Page 2: Folio 1v, right side

1. ḥaqqdır elbetde Rab
2. ul-‘ālemîn evvelin āhirini
3. mezārdan qaldırub, mekân-
4. dan münezzeh olan
5. Allāhü te‘ālā bana
6. emir olunandan ve nehy
7. olunandan, ya‘nî ahlāk-ı

Bottom left: zemîme

Page 3: Folio 1v, left side

1. zemīmeden, ve daḥi [in red ink] a‘māl-ı
2. zāhire—ki abdest, namāz,
3. oruc, ḥacc, zekāt,
4. gusül, istinhā, teyemmüm,
5. ḥayz, nifās, alım
6. satım. Ve daḥi [in red ink] aḥkām-ı
7. şer‘iye beşdir: vücut,

Page 4: Folio 1r, right side

1. nedib, ibāḥat, ḥürmet,
2. kerāhet. Hāşıl-i kelām
3. bunun emşāli ‘ilm-i
4. ḥāldan su’āl itse
5. gerekdir ‘ālem-i dünyāda
6. cān tende iken,
7. çalışub öğrenmedikçe

Bottom left: ben

[pages missing]

3.0. Textual Notes

T-S NS 297.51

Page 1: fol. 1r, left side

6. *añladuğı* ‘[that] he understood’: This is an archaic form of the modern Turkish *anladığı*.

Page 3: fol. 1v, left side

3. *zekā* (زكاة) ‘alms’: This is Qur’ānic spelling. *Zekā* is more commonly rendered either زكاة or in the plural, *zekāt* (زکات).
4. *istinḥā*: This is an error for *instincā* (استنجا) ‘washing in the prescribed manner’.

Pages 3–4: fol. 1v, left side, and fol. 1r, right side

- 1v, left, l. 7–1r, right, ll. 1–2. *vücüb*, *nedib*, *ibāhat*, *hürmet*, *kerāhet* ‘mandatory, recommended, permissible, forbidden, and reprehensible’: These are equivalent to the Arabic *wājib*/*fard* (فرد/واجب), *mustaḥab* (مستحب), *mubāḥ*/*ḥalāl* (مباح/حلال), *makrūh* (مكروه), and *ḥarām* (حرام). However, the Ottoman Turkish words do not have exactly the same force as their Arabic cognates.

4.0. Translation

4.1. T-S Ar. 39.153

‘Rules of Prayer’ Section

Page 1: Folio 2r, left side

1. If you bow without reading [a chapter from] the Qur’ān,
2. then go back
3. and read the Qur’ān and
4. bow again afterward,
5. your prayer¹⁹ is invalid.
6. If, during the second *rak‘a*²⁰ of [one of the five] obligatory prayers,
7. before the *taḥiyyāt*,²¹ you have already said

Page 2: Folio 2v, right side

1. ‘May God have mercy on Muḥammad’,²²

¹⁹ I have chosen to use the second person singular in the translation to avoid stilted English. A literal translation would read, ‘it is invalidation of prayer’.

²⁰ The unit of standing, bowing, standing, prostrating. Each of the five obligatory daily prayers in Islam consists of a set number of *rak‘as*.

²¹ التحيات لله, recited during the *qa‘da*, the sitting down after a *rak‘a*.

²² اللهم صلى على محمد, recited during the *qa‘da* after the final *rak‘a*, and after the *taḥiyyāt*.

2. mixing them up,
3. your prayer is invalid.
4. If you bow twice [in succession],
5. your prayer is invalid.
- 6–7. If you recite a number of verses audibly when they should not be recited [aloud],

Bottom left: if you recite

Page 3: Folio 3r, left side

1. your prayer is invalid.
2. If, during the second *rak'a*,
3. you do not sit down,²³ your prayer is invalid.
4. If you forget to recite the *taḥiyyāt*,
5. whether all of it,
6. or a little of it, or
7. in the first *taḥiyyāt* or

Page 4: Folio 3v, right side

1. in the last *qa'da*, your prayer is invalid.
2. If, during the *witr* prayer,²⁴

²³ This presumably refers to the *qa'da*.

²⁴ A supplemental prayer offered between the night (*ishā'*) and dawn (*fajr*) prayers.

3. you forget²⁵ to say the ‘*qunūt*’ prayer,²⁶
4. your prayer is invalid.
- 5–6. If, during the first two *rak‘as* in [one of the three] four-*rak‘a* obligatory prayers,
7. you leave out both the *Fātiḥa*²⁷ and

Bottom left: the chapter

Page 5: Folio 4r, left side

1. the chapter,²⁸
2. then in the last two
- 3–4. *rak‘as*, you say the *Fātiḥa* and the chapter, again,
5. your prayer is invalid.
6. Whatever obligatory prayer it is,
7. if in the first two *rak‘as*

Page 6: Folio 4v, right side

1. you leave out either the *Fātiḥa* or the chapter,
2. your prayer is invalid.

²⁵ Here, too, I use the second person singular whereas the Turkish text is in the third person singular, which would translate to ‘if one forgets’ or ‘if he forgets’.

²⁶ A supplication included in the *witr* prayer. The Arabic word *qunūt* (قنوت) refers to worshipping God humbly and obediently.

²⁷ The opening chapter of the Qur’ān.

²⁸ Any chapter of the Qur’ān, but conventionally *sūra* 112: *Ikhlāṣ*.

- 3,5. If in one *raʿka*, you recite the Fātiḥa twice,
4. one right after the other,
6. your prayer is invalid.
7. If you prostrate three times,

Bottom left: invalid

Page 7: Folio 1r, left side

1. your prayer is invalid.
2. If, after the Fātiḥa, you hesitate
3. for a while, thinking, ‘Which chapter
- 4–5. shall I read?’, your prayer is invalid.
6. If you leave out a prostration,
7. then later you remember it and perform it,

Page 8: Folio 1v, right side

1. your prayer is invalid.
2. If, before reciting the Fātiḥa,
3. you recite part of the chapter
4. or [even] one letter [of it], your prayer is invalid.
5. If, during an obligatory prayer,
6. you do not perform the first *jalsa*,²⁹
7. your prayer is invalid.

²⁹ Briefly sitting back on the heels after the first prostration.

Bottom left: standing

Page 9: Folio 1v, left side

1. If you leave out standing upright,
2. bowing, or the two prostrations,
- 3–4. and you remember in the course of the prayer or following *salām*³⁰
5. and add a *rakʿa*,
6. your prayer
7. is invalid.

Page 10: Folio 1r, right side

1. If you forget bowing or prostrations, and
2. you remember after the *taḥiyyāt*,³¹
3. and you perform the prostration or bowing
- 4–5. and recite the *taḥiyyāt* again,
6. your prayer is invalid.
7. You must learn these matters by heart.

Bottom left: Furthermore

³⁰ *والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله*, uttered at the end of the prayer.

³¹ *التحيات لله*, recited during the *qaʿda*, at the end of each *rakʿa*.

‘Utterances of Unbelief’ Section

Page 11: Folio 4v, left side

- 1–2. Furthermore, there are 27 causes of falling into unbelief
[1.1 in red ink]
3. The first is inadequate conviction.
4. The second is weak belief.
- 5–6. The third is to stray from the right [path] by means of the
nine organs.³² The fourth
7. is to sin persistently.

Page 12: Folio 4r, right side

- 1–2. The fifth is to abandon gratitude for the blessing of Islam.
3. The sixth is not to fear falling into faithlessness.
4. The seventh is unjustly
5. to oppress someone.
6. The eighth is not to answer
7. the customary call to prayer.

Bottom left: not to [answer]

³² According to most *‘ilm-i ḥāl* manuals, the hand, tongue, eye, stomach, heart, ear, foot, female vulva, and nose.

Page 13: Folio 3v, left side

- 1–3. The ninth is not to obey your mother and father when they have not violated the *shari‘a*.
4. The tenth is to make
5. too many vows.
- 6–7. The eleventh is to abandon the correct performance of the five obligatory prayers.

Page 14: Folio 3r, right side

- 1–2. The twelfth is to behave carelessly during your prayer—
- 3–4. that is, as if you were undertaking something easy or insignificant.
5. The thirteenth is to drink wine.
6. The fourteenth is
7. to harm Muslims.

Bottom left: The [fif]teenth

Page 15: Folio 2v, left side

- 1–2. The fifteenth is to sell ‘sainthood’ [friendship with God] on false pretences.
3. The sixteenth is to forget your sin.
4. The seventeenth is
5. to be pleased with yourself.
6. The eighteenth is to know your deeds too well [exact meaning unclear].

7. The nineteenth is

Page 16: Folio 2r, right side

1. to commit slander. The twentieth
2. is to be envious. The twenty-
- 3–5. first is to oppose your master [or teacher] when he has not violated the *sharī'a*. The twenty-
- 6–7. second is to call a man 'stupid' without testing him.

Bottom left: The twenty-[third]

[pages missing]

4.2. T-S NS 297.51

Concluding Section

[pages missing]

Page 1: Folio 1r, left side

1. it would certainly be of no use.
- 2–4. They would say that you should have prepared when you were [still] alive.
5. Now then [in red ink]: O brother believer,
6. this is what the poor one [i.e., the author] has come to understand.
7. On the Day of Judgement,

Page 2: Folio 1v, right side

1. it is unquestionably true that the Lord
- 2–3. of the universe will raise from the grave from first to last
[i.e., everyone].
- 4–5. God the exalted, he without limit, [has shown] me
6. what is ordered and what is forbidden,
7. that is, the morals of

Bottom left: reprehensible acts

Page 3: Folio 1v, left side

1. reprehensible acts, and also [in red ink] the public acts of
2. ablution, obligatory prayer,
3. fasting, *hajj*, alms,
4. major ablution, washing in the prescribed manner, ablution
with clean earth,
5. [cleansing of] menstrual and vaginal discharge, buying
6. and selling. Furthermore [in red ink], the statutes
7. of the *sharīʿa* are five [categories]: mandatory,

Page 4: Folio 1r, right side

1. recommended, permissible, forbidden,
2. and reprehensible. In short,
- 3–4. you must ask questions in this way about religious matters
5. while you are [still] in this world,

6. while life is [still] in the flesh

7. Unless you work hard and learn,

Bottom left: I

[pages missing]

Plate XXXIII: T-S Ar. 39.153, fol. 1, recto. Pages 10 (right) and 7 (left) of this section of the booklet. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Plate XXXIV: T-S Ar. 39.153, fol. 1, verso. Pages 8 (right) and 9 (left) of this section of the booklet. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Plate XXXV: T-S Ar. 39.153, fol. 2, recto. Pages 16 (right) and 1 (left) of this section of the booklet. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Plate XXXVI: T-S Ar. 39.153, fol. 2, verso. Pages 2 (right) and 15 (left) of this section of the booklet. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Plate XXXVII: T-S Ar. 39.153, fol. 3, recto. Pages 14 (right) and 3 (left) of this section of the booklet. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Plate XXXVIII: T-S Ar. 39.153, fol. 3, verso. Pages 4 (right) and 13 (left) of this section of the booklet. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Plate XXXIX: T-S Ar. 39.153, fol. 4, recto. Pages 12 (right) and 5 (left) of this section of the booklet. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Plate XLI: T-S NS 297.51, recto. Pages 4 (right) and 1 (left) of this section. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

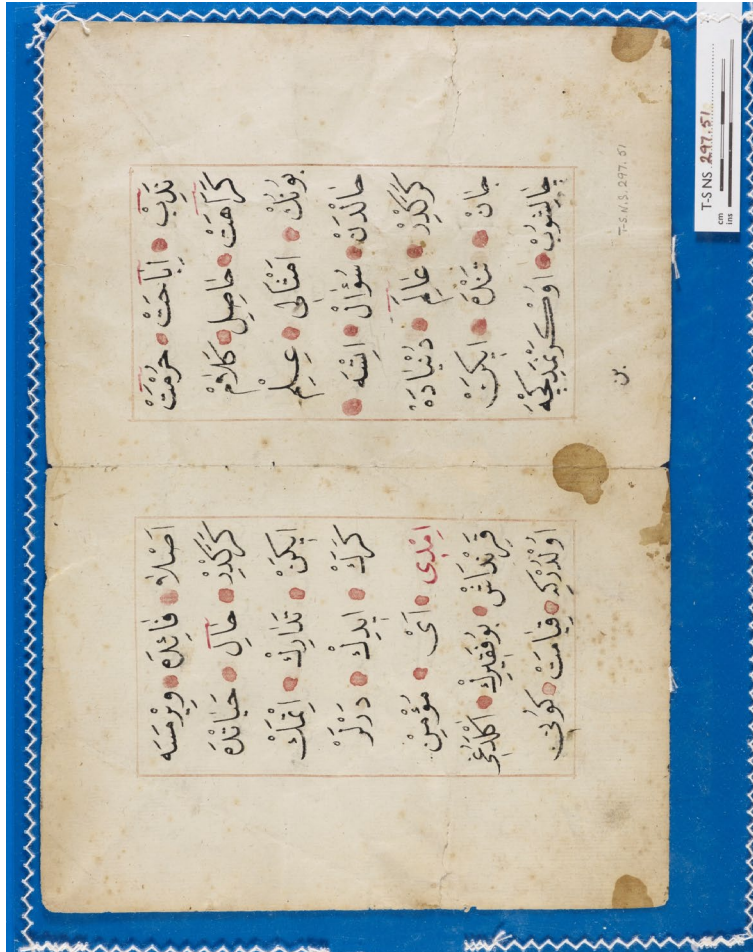
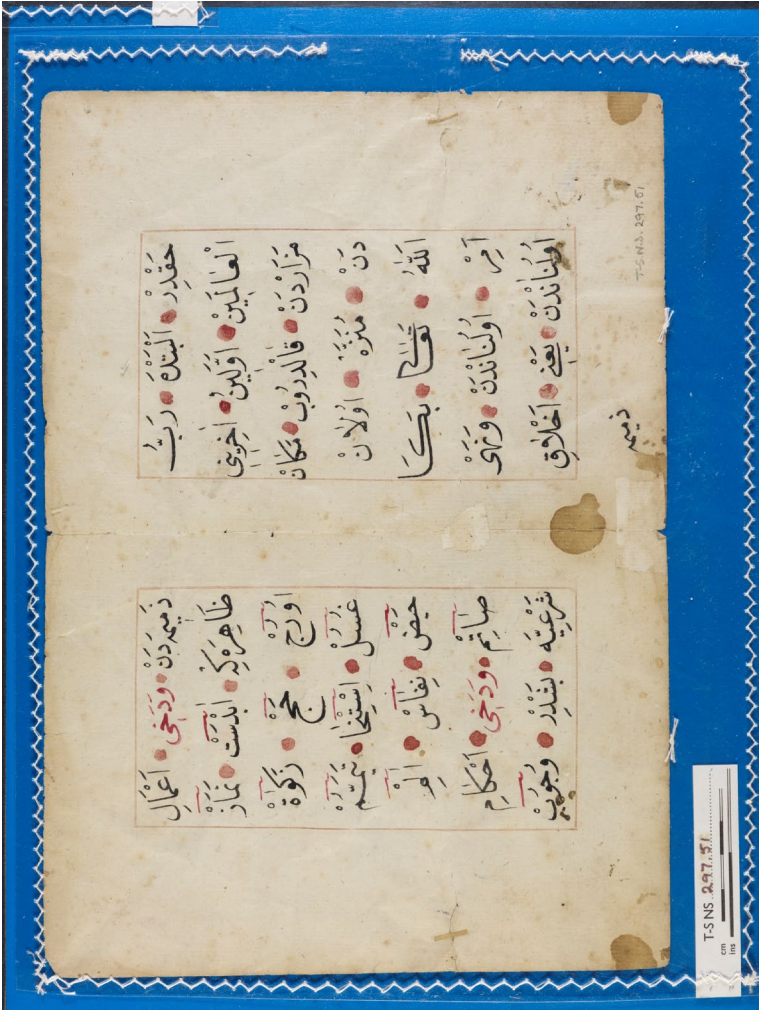


Plate XLII: T-S NS 297.51, verso. Pages 2 (right) and 3 (left) of this section. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



**DOCUMENTS 4–5:
T-S AR. 39.435 AND T-S NS 306.84**

**DELIVERIES OF FIREWOOD,
MID-18TH CENTURY(?)**

1.0. Discussion

These two badly torn documents are letters in Ottoman Turkish, concerning shipments of firewood (*odun*). The author addresses the recipient as ‘my father’ (*benim pederim*), which could mean either his biological father or a revered elder. In the second letter, however, ‘my father’ gives way to ‘my brother’ (*benim karındaşım*), suggesting that the recipient is a friend and/or comrade, much like the Sayyid Muḥammad and Sayyid ‘Umar to whom the writer sends greetings at the close of the first letter. These features, as well as a reference to Mevlevī dervishes in the first letter, open the possibility that the firewood may have been destined for the lodge, or *tekke*, of the Mevlevī dervishes in Cairo. No date survives on either letter, but if the Mevlevī connection is accurate, then both must have been written after 1016 AH/1607 CE, when the Mevlevī lodge was founded. The language and script of the letters and their overall appearance suggest that both were composed by the same author at around the same time, and possibly to the same recipient, namely al-Ḥājj Muḥammad.

1.1. Firewood and Mevlevī

Cairo's Mevlevī lodge was established on the sites of a large fourteenth-century Mamluk religious complex and a neighbouring Mamluk palace. The remains of the structure, which was an active lodge until 1945, stand near the Mosque of Sultan Ḥasan, at the foot of Cairo's citadel. The Mevlevī order was not present in Egypt before the Ottoman conquest, and, as in the other Ottoman Arab provinces, adherents tended to be Turcophone, and often transplants from the Ottoman central lands.³³ Our letter's recipient could fit this description.

Meanwhile, the lodge's endowment deed (*waqfiyya*), examined by the Italian archaeologist Giuseppe Fanfoni, reveals that this was a sizeable establishment, housing and feeding not only the fifty resident dervishes but also destitute people who sought refuge at the *tekke* and pilgrims visiting the site (Fanfoni 1999, 106–7). Such an operation would have had a constant need for firewood to provide fire for cooking and heat for the kitchen, where Mevlevī novices spent much of their initiation period (Fanfoni 1999, 115 n. 31), and other parts of the complex, including the dervishes' cells, guest rooms, and the quarters of the lodge's shaykh (Fanfoni 1999, 109–16, 118–22).

Trees for firewood were, however, not abundant in Egypt, and firewood was regularly imported from Anatolia. This may be what our two documents describe, although in both cases, the

³³ Dickie (1979, 9–10); Fanfoni (1999, 107 n. 6, 111, 115 n. 29); Behrens-Abouseif (2007, 166–69); Williams (2018, 134–35).

wood is carried by Egyptian, or at least Arab, navigators (Ottoman Turkish singular, *re'īs*): in T-S Ar. 39.435, 'Abdullāh Anṣārī al-Sa'īdī delivers 275 *qinṭārs* of wood; in T-S NS 306.84, Muḥammad Shāfi'ī Būlāqī, from Cairo's Nile port of Būlāq, delivers 300. These are enormous quantities: 275 *qinṭārs* is equivalent to 13,750 kilograms or 30,313 pounds (over fifteen tonnes), 300 to 15,000 kilograms or 33,069 pounds (over sixteen tonnes). Moreover, the writer's use of the expression 'this time' (*bu defā'*) suggests that these deliveries were regular occurrences. Apart from the sheer amounts, what suggests that the wood has been imported into Egypt from a considerable distance is the calculations in the right margin of T-S NS 306.84: Muḥammad Shāfi'ī Būlāqī has incurred '528' (presumably either Rūmī *ghurūsh* or Egyptian *pāras*) in shipping costs (*navlūn bahrī*).

If we posit that the firewood was destined for Cairo's Mevlevī lodge, then the letter's invocations of 'my father' and 'my brother' could indicate that the writer was likewise a Mevlevī, perhaps writing from one of the great Melevī lodges in the Ottoman central lands, such as Istanbul's Yenikapı lodge, the largest in the entire empire (Dickie 1979, 9). In that case, 'our excellency' (*ḥazretlerimiz*), who was sending unspecified 'things' (*şeyler*) to the recipient, could be that lodge's shaykh. The Yenikapı lodge was and is located near a major port on the Sea of Marmara, a convenient point of departure for ships heading south. This could also explain T-S NS 306.84's seeming reference to the Marmara. These conclusions are all very tentative, however, and based on fairly minor elements of these two letters that may be merely circumstantial.

1.2. Janissaries

In contrast, T-S NS 306.84 clearly indicates a link between the firewood deliveries and Cairo's Janissary regiment. The writer refers to 'the *kethüdā* there' or possibly 'the *kethüdā* [who presides] over that region' (*ol ʔaraʔa kethüdā*). In the first half of the eighteenth century, as André Raymond notes, the *kethüdā*, or deputy commander, of Egypt's Janissary regiment acted as customs agent in chief for the entire province, supervising Jewish *mu'allims* in place at the various ports (Raymond 1973–74, II:625). It is possible, though far from certain, that these two letters found their way into the Genizah because of Jewish *mu'allims*, nominally supervised by Cairo's Janissary *kethüdā*, who assessed customs duties on the huge shipments of firewood.

The letter's reference to the *kethüdā* also allows us to narrow down the date of composition of these two letters. The *kethüdā* holds a letter of credit (*ḥavāle*) for 100 gold coins (*zer-i maḥbūb altūn*), which the recipient is urged to fulfil before the *kethüdā* departs Cairo, perhaps on the *ḥajj*, in which Egypt's Janissary *kethüdā* played a leading role. The *zer maḥbūb* was first minted in Cairo in 1149 AH/1736 CE as part of an effort by the Ottoman sultan to introduce a coin with slightly less gold content than its predecessors (Raymond 1973–74, I:31–32). Thus, the letters must have been written after 1736 but possibly before the 1760s, when 'Alī Bey al-Kabīr replaced Egypt's Jewish customs officials with Syrian Catholics (Livingston 1971; Grecelius 1981, 131–33, 173). The letter's recipient is apparently supposed to transmit the gold coins via the 'man called Sharīf Yūsuf' who is attached to the *kethüdā* and who could well be a Janissary, too.

Egypt's Janissary regiment in the first half of the eighteenth century included a number of officers who bore the honorific *sharīf*, indicating purported descent from the Prophet Muḥammad (Hathaway 1997b, 80, 99). A Sharīf household, headed by such officers, even took shape within the regiment (Hathaway 1997b, 76, 84).

Incidentally, this date range would mean that the *kethüdā* mentioned in T-S NS 306.84 would almost certainly have been a member of the Ẹazdağlı household, which had attained hegemony over Egypt's Janissary regiment by 1736. Their supremacy owed much to the enterprising ʿOsmān Kethüdā al-Ẹazdağlı, who, however, was assassinated in November 1736 (Hathaway 1997b, 74–79, 81–82, 84). The *kethüdā* of the document may therefore be one of his Ẹazdağlı successors, possibly Süleymān Kethüdā or ʿAbdullāh Kethüdā (mentioned in Ch. 1, Doc. 3), both of whom held the post in the late 1730s. Alternatively, he could be the formidable Ibrāhīm Kethüdā, who essentially ran Egypt from 1748–54 (Hathaway 1997b, 79–83, 88–99), or his successor, the famous architectural patron ʿAbdurraḥman Kethüdā, who dominated Cairo's Janissary regiment from 1749–65, so that his name became virtually synonymous with the rank of *kethüdā*.³⁴

1.3. Delivery Logistics

In each of these letters, the ship captain's name is written, then subsequently struck through, just above the itemisation of costs. Perhaps ʿAbdullāh Anṣārī al-Saʿīdī's and Muḥammad Shāfīʿī

³⁴ Raymond (1995, 32–45, 98–114); Hathaway (1997b, 84–86, 99–101).

Būlāqī's names were crossed out once they had delivered their cargoes and received full reimbursement for their costs. Equally puzzling is the writer's plea, in T-S NS 306.84, to either the recipient or the *kethūdā* to free 'our register' from the boatman, in this case Muḥammad Shāfi'ī Būlāqī. Perhaps we are to understand that the ship's captain had seized the register of accounts from the firewood provider until such time as he had completed the delivery and been reimbursed for his expenses. In that case, release of the register may have been linked to the 100 gold pieces: only once the letter's recipient had given the *kethūdā* the cash to fulfil the letter of credit could Būlāqī receive his payment, and only then would he release the register. The document's verso bears a filing note with Būlāqī's name, perhaps indicating that confirmations of firewood deliveries were filed under the names of the ship captains who delivered them.

2.0. Texts

2.1. T-S Ar. 39.435

Paper, badly torn along the right side and bottom. 17.50 cm x 15.20 cm.

Recto

1. [] peder-i 'azīzim //el-Ḥāc Muḥammed// ḥazretlerinin ḥuzūr-i şerīflerine
2. [] selāmlar ve ḥayır dū'ālar olunduḡdan soñra, fi-mā ba'dehu

3. Benim peder-i ‘azîzim, bu def‘a Re’is ‘Abdullāh Enşārî Sa‘îdî ile ikiyüz
4. yetmiş beş kaçtār odun irsāl olunmuşdur. Vuşûlünde aḥz idesiz.

[continuing on the left-hand side of the page:]

5. Benim peder-i ‘azîzim, bu minvāl üzere
6. aḥz idüb ve defterinize kayd
7. idüb, dervişin-i Mevlevîyîn
8. ol tarafda seferü’l-re’is üzere
9. ...

Bottom, Middle of the Page³⁵

1. ‘Abdullāh Enşārî Sa‘îdî
2. Fî odun
3. ۲۷ kaçtār
4. ۲۷[۵] []
5. [۷۴۲۵]
6. [navlū]n [bah]rî

[additional writing below illegible]

³⁵ This is a summation of the navigator’s delivery and costs, in two columns, much of it torn away.

Right Margin, Upside-Down

1. Ve benim peder-i ‘azîzim []
2. ‘şeyleri in şā’ Allāh te‘ālā []
3. İrsāl ideriz ḥaṭırımızda’ dîr [?] ve ol [ṭarafda]
4. Seydî Muḥammed’e ve Seydî ‘Ömer’e selām[lar].

Verso: Blank

2.2. T-S NS 306.84

Paper, badly torn at top left and along bottom. 17.5 cm x 15.8 cm.

Recto

1. ‘İzzetlü ve mürüvvetlü peder-i ‘azîzim ḥazretlerinin
ḥuṣūr-ı şerîf[lerine],
2. derûn üzere selāmlar ve ḥayır dü‘ālar olundukdan soñra,
3. fî-mā ba‘dehu: Benim peder-i ‘azîzim, bu def‘a Muḥammed
Şāfi‘î Bülāḳî ile üç [yüz]
4. ḳanṭār odun İrsāl olunmuşdur, vuşûlünde aḥz idüb,....
[continuing on the left-hand side of the page:]
5. Benim ḳarındaşım, bu minvāl ü[zere aḥz]
6. idüb, ve defteriniz[e] [ḳayd idüb]
7. ve vuşûlünde bildüre[siz] []
8. [] [ol] ṭarafda []

[The bottom 2–3 lines are torn away.]

Bottom, Middle of the Page³⁶

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | Muḥammed Ṣāfi'ī Būlākī | |
| 2. | Fī | odun |
| 3. | ۳. | kaṇtār |
| 4. | | ۳۰۰ |
| 5. | | ۹۰۰۰ |
| 6. | navlūn baḥrī | ۰۰۲۸ |
| 7. | kaḡayık [?] | ۰۰۴۰ |
| 8. | Marmara'da [?] | ۰۰۷۰ |
| 9. | ‘aşır | ۰۳۳ [one place torn away] |
| 10. | | ۹۹ [two places torn away] |

Right Margin, Upside-Down

1. Ve benim peder-i [‘azīzim], []
2. ol ʔaraḫa keṯḫūdā s[]
3. luṯṯ idüb, bizim defterimiz... []
4. mellāḫdan ḫalāṣ idesiz. Ve daḫi
5. mezkūr ile bir ādam vardır, Şerīf Yūsuf
6. dirler, mezkūre yüz zer-i maḥbūb altın
7. havāle virilmişdir. Luṯṯ idüb, bir gün

³⁶ This is a summation of the navigator's delivery and costs.

8. evvel mezkûre yüz altûn viresiz,
9. ba‘ide gidecekdir. Luṭf idüb

Verso, Top Left Corner, Sideways (Arabic filing note)

الشافعي	1
محمد	2
البولاقى	3

3.0. Textual Notes

3.1. T-S Ar. 39.435

Recto

1. //el-Hāc Muḥammed//: In letters of this type, the addressee’s name was customarily written above the first line, probably as a mark of reverence, even though it was to be read as part of the line. My thanks to Christopher Whitehead for pointing this out.
2. *dū‘ālar* (دوعالr) ‘prayers’ is an alternative spelling for *du‘ālar* (دعالr).

Bottom, Middle of the Page

1. ~~‘Abdullāh Enṣārī Sa‘īdī~~: There seems to be a convention, also observed in the following document, of crossing out the ship captain’s name—perhaps when the delivery is made?

Right Margin, Upside-Down

3. *īrsāl* (ايرسال) ‘send’ (or ‘sending’) is an alternative spelling for *irsāl* (ارسال).

3.2. T-S NS 306.84

Recto

2. *dū‘ālar* (دوعالر) ‘prayers’ is an alternative spelling for *du‘ālar* (دعالر).
4. *īrsāl* (ايرسال) ‘send’ (or ‘sending’) is an alternative spelling for *irsāl* (ارسال).

Bottom, Middle of the Page

7. *ḡayīḡ* [?] ‘caique’ [?]: This small boat would have been used to disembark goods and/or crew from ship to shore. It might also have been used for fishing during the journey.

Right Margin, Upside-Down

4. *mellāḡdan* ‘from the boatman’ is spelled with a *shadda* over the ل. Conventionally the word for ‘boatman’ is spelled *melāḡ* (ملاح).

5. [total: 7425]

6. [shipp]ing [cost]s

[additional writing below illegible]

Right Margin, Upside-Down

1. And my dear father []

2–3. says, ‘We will send the things, God, the exalted, willing. We haven’t forgotten them.’

4. Greeting[s] to Sayyid Muḥammad and Sayyid ‘Umar [who are] over there.

Verso: Blank

4.2. T-S NS 306.84

Recto

1. To my noble and generous, most honoured, esteemed, noble, dear father, _____

2. After heartfelt greetings and sincere prayers,

3. now then: My dear father, this time, three [hundred] *qinṭārs* of firewood were sent with Muḥammad Shāfi‘ī Būlāqī.

4. When they arrive, take possession of them...

[continuing on the left-hand side of the page:]

5. My brother, in this m[anner take possession of them]

6. and [record it in] your register,

7. and inform me when they arrive [].

8. [] there []

[The bottom 2–3 lines are torn away.]

Bottom, Middle of the Page

1. Muḥammad Shāfiʿī Būlāqī
2. [price] per [*qinṭār*] firewood
3. 30 [*pāras*?] *qinṭārs*
4. _____ 300
5. [total:] 9000
6. shipping costs –528
7. caique [?] —40
8. in the [Sea of] Marmara [?] —75
9. the tithe –33 [one place torn away]
10. [total:] 99 [two places torn away]

Right Margin, Upside-Down

1. And my [dear] father []
2. the *kethūdā* there []
3. do [us] a favour, and free our register... []
4. from the boatman [?]. Furthermore,
5. there is a man with the aforementioned [*kethūdā*] whom they call Sharīf Yūsuf.

6. A letter of credit for 100 gold coins was given to the aforementioned [*kethūdā*].
7. Do [us] a favour and immediately
8. give the aforementioned [*kethūdā*] the 100 in gold,
9. for he is about to travel far away. Do the favour.

Verso, Top Left Corner, Sideways (Arabic filing note)

1. Al-Shāfiʿī
2. Muḥammad
3. al-Būlāqī

Plate XLIII: T-S Ar. 39.435, recto. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Plate XLIV: T-S NS 306.84, recto. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Plate XLV: T-S NS 306.84, verso. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



DOCUMENT 6: ENA 3904.13

SUFI POETRY, 1758³⁷

1.0. Discussion

This may be the only specimen of Ottoman Turkish poetry in the entire Genizah. The document as a whole consists of two poems purportedly by the seventeenth-century Sufi poet known as ‘Āşık ‘Ömer (d. ca. 1119 AH/1707 CE), followed by a poem, possibly written in homage, if not in emulation, by one Yahyā Çavuş in 1172 AH/1758 CE. Thus this document may represent a step in Yahyā Çavuş’s formation as a poet.

1.1. ‘Āşık ‘Ömer

1.1.1. His Identity and Life

‘Āşık ‘Ömer is a known figure in Ottoman poetry, although numerous details of his biography are open to debate (Duymaz 2014). The title ‘*āşık*, literally ‘lover’, refers to a lovelorn poet, though with the additional implication of a lover of God, i.e., a Sufi. ‘Āşık ‘Ömer was unquestionably a mystic, although whether

³⁷ I owe an immense debt of gratitude to Professor Victoria Rowe Holbrook of Istanbul Bilgi University for her help with the translation of this document, and to Professor Mücahit Kaçar of Istanbul University for his help with the transcription. I also thank Professor Holbrook for introducing me to Professor Kaçar, and for her insights into the poems’ allusions and overall contexts.

he belonged to a Sufi order is less clear. He had inclinations toward both the Mevlevî and the Bektāshî orders (Ergun 1936, 7, 76, 77; Karasoy and Yavuz 2015, 623; Gülmez 2015). Wandering *‘āşık* poets in the Ottoman Empire, Crimea, and Azerbaijan recited their compositions to the accompaniment of the long-necked Turkish stringed instrument known as a *saz* or *bağlama*; hence they are often called *saz* poets, as well.

Despite the fame of his poems, *‘Āşık ‘Ömer*’s birthdate and provenance are not entirely certain. Various scholars over the past century or so have estimated his birth year as either ca. 1029 AH/1620 CE or ca. 1061 AH/1651 CE, although the earlier date seems to be more widely accepted today (Karasoy and Yavuz 2015, 26, cf. 18, 800; Çavdar 2022, 502). A number of his poems refer to a town called Gezlevi or Gözleve as his birthplace, but confusion arises from the fact that at least two towns of that name existed in the Ottoman Empire and its dependencies: one in the Crimea, known in classical antiquity as Eupatoria (today Yevpatoriya), and one southwest of the central Anatolian city of Konya. Several prominent twentieth-century Turkish scholars believed that *‘Āşık ‘Ömer* was a Crimean Tatar—an opinion that still holds in the Crimea today (there is even a statue of him in Yevpatoriya)—or at least that he had been born in the Crimea before settling in the western Anatolian district of Aydın. (A few twentieth-century scholars even maintained that he was born in Aydın.) Nonetheless, the weight of critical opinion today points to the village of Gezlevi (today Korualan) between Konya and the Mediterranean port of Alanya as his probable birthplace (Karasoy

and Yavuz 2015, 18–23; Çavdar 2022, 502).³⁸ Unlike most *‘āşiks*, *‘Ömer* probably attended a *madrasa*, or theological seminary, perhaps in the nearby town of Hadim; this influence comes through in many of his poems, which show him to have read the classics of medieval Persian poetry, as well as the Qur’ān (Ergun 1936, 11). He then joined the Ottoman army, fighting in numerous campaigns that took him to the Austrian, Venetian, Russian, and Safavid fronts.³⁹ Some early twentieth-century scholars held that he was attached to the imperial Janissaries (Ergun 1936, 10; entry *‘Āşık Ömer* in *Türk Edebiyatı Eser Sözlüğü*).

1.1.2. His Works

‘Āşık ‘Ömer wrote in two principal styles: prosody (*aruz* in Turkish), a sort of cross between prose and poetry in which the poet deploys parallel rhythms and word forms instead of rhyme *per se*, and syllabic metre (*hece* in Turkish), which employs a more conventional rhyme scheme in shorter lines. The former style is associated with *dīvān* poetry, the style favoured by court poets who compiled *dīvāns*, or formal collections of poetry. *Hece* is arguably better suited to the *saz*-playing wandering Sufi minstrel, although *‘Āşık ‘Ömer* appears occasionally to have blurred the distinction between the two styles (Karahan 1991; Özarslan 1996, 280–84; Çavdar 2022, 503). This innovation may have been part of an

³⁸ Among other factors, present-day scholars note that no traces of the Crimean Tatar dialect of Turkish can be detected in *‘Āşık ‘Ömer*’s poems, whereas some of his poems employ words from a south central Anatolian dialect (Çavdar 2022, 502).

³⁹ Karahan (1991); Karasoy and Yavuz (2015, 158); Çavdar (2022, 503).

overall stylistic rapprochement between *dīvān* and ‘folk’ poetry that seems to have occurred in the course of the seventeenth century (Özarslan 1996, 286–87).

As to the subjects of the approximately 1,500 of his poems that have survived, many reflect ‘Āşık ‘Ömer’s travels during his military service; these arguably stand in for the wanderings of the conventional ‘*āşık*. Like a true ‘*āşık*, he writes frequently of love: for a nebulous beloved, who may be male or female; for dear friends; for God. He also wrote more idiosyncratic pieces, including at least one animal poem (Macfie and Macfie 1997).

In this document, the scribe, possibly Yahyā Çavuş himself, has reproduced what purport to be two of ‘Āşık ‘Ömer’s *hece* poems, both slight variations on the *murabba‘*, or ‘square’, poem comprising multiple quatrains ending in the same word; each example contains four such quatrains. In the first poem, every quatrain ends in the suffix *–yuz* (‘we are’). In the second poem, each quatrain ends in *şimden gerü* (‘ever after’ or ‘forevermore’). This is a lovelorn poem in the classic ‘*āşık* tradition. The object of affection is one Meḥmed Shah, who may be a Sufi master but could also be the Ottoman sultan Meḥmed IV (r. 1058–99 AH/1648–87 CE), the first emperor under whom ‘Āşık ‘Ömer saw military service.

1.2. Yahyā Çavuş

Yahyā Çavuş’s own poem, in contrast, is a much more straightforward, even pedestrian, effort. It begins with a modified *murabba‘* in which lines 1, 2, and 4 end in *olsun*, ‘may it be’. The

remainder of the poem consists of couplets ending in *olsun*, except for the final one, which rhymes *zer* ('gold') and *hüner* ('art' or 'skill'). The metre seems somewhat uneven. *Çavuş* was a middling officer rank in Egypt's Janissary regiment, and it seems quite possible that Yaḥyā was a literate military officer who composed poetry but whose skill at deploying Ottoman Turkish in verse was no match for that of 'Āşık 'Ömer. The repetitive sentence structure in every other line of the poem, a variation on *bizi her kim...etse, ...olsun* ('whoever may [conditional transitive verb] us, may he/it/they be...') contributes to this impression.

While we cannot know whether Yaḥyā himself wrote down these poems, the document's orthography suggests that the scribe was not entirely accustomed to writing formal Ottoman Turkish. In addition to a handful of idiosyncratic spellings, he seems unfamiliar with the standard rendering of the Persian *iḏāfa* (as in *ehl-i vakār*, 'people of dignity', in the first line of Yaḥyā *Çavuş*'s poem), employing a *ي* or no vowel at all. And he eschews the Persianate *گ* to indicate a hard 'g' or 'gy' diphthong, using a simple *ك* instead.

Perhaps, in that case, Yaḥyā *Çavuş* is using 'Āşık 'Ömer's *oeuvre* as a model to improve his own poetic style, even if he does not aspire to 'Āşık 'Ömer's mystical eloquence. It is even possible, though perhaps rather unlikely, that he is using poetry to assimilate Ottoman Turkish vocabulary and syntax—in other words, that Turkish is not his native language. Like many other Janissary recruits in Egypt, whether mamluks or Arabophone locals who bought their way into the corps—the *devshirme* was in abeyance by 1758—Yaḥyā could have begun to learn Turkish when he

joined up. He, like many of these others, could also have been a convert to Islam, perhaps even a Jewish convert. This might explain how his poem, along with copies of ‘Aşık ‘Ömer’s poems, ended up in the Genizah. On the other hand, both poets’ poems could have found their way to the Genizah by other means.

The content and tone of Yaḥyā Çavuş’s poem are entirely compatible with mysticism, and it would be no surprise if he himself were a Sufi. Certain Sufi orders were popular among the Ottoman soldiery. The Bektāshīs had an official connection to the imperial Janissaries, while several branches of the Ḥalvetī/Khalwatī order that came to Egypt in the early sixteenth century won a large following among the provincial garrison troops.⁴⁰ If Yaḥyā were a convert to Islam, moreover, then he, like many other converts in the Ottoman milieu, may have found Sufism an appealing route into the new faith, given Sufism’s generally empathetic view of other faiths, particularly other monotheisms, as parallel paths toward the divine. Yet his poetry evokes the Melāmī strain of Sufism, characterised by the effacement of the self and the willing acceptance of condemnation by others (Holbrook 1991, 19; 1992, 16). Thus in verse after verse, the poet asks God to bestow blessings and prosperity on the very people who ridicule him and his associates. This was a far more ascetic brand of Sufism than that to which mystically-inclined soldiers usually adhered. By the eighteenth century, in fact, the Melāmī as a coherent Sufi order had gone underground (Holbrook 1991, 25).

⁴⁰ Uzunçarşılı (1945a, I:148–50, 178); Hathaway (2003, 54–56, 209 nn. 48–50).

1.3. A *Cönk*?

In format, this document resembles the genre known in Turkish as *cönk*, a handwritten, usually anonymous, compilation of poetry by wandering *saz* poets that never appeared in a formal *divân*. Quite a number of ‘Āşık ‘Ömer’s poems, as well as a number attributed to him, have been discovered in *cönks*,⁴¹ although I have not been able to find these two poems among any of the known collections of ‘Āşık ‘Ömer’s output. Our document may represent Yaḥyā Çavuş’s attempt at compiling a *cönk* that, for unknown reasons, he left unfinished. Alternatively, Yaḥyā Çavuş may have been a contributor to a larger *cönk* that included poems attributed to ‘Āşık ‘Ömer, as well. In that case, the scribe may have been copying down poems recited to him, perhaps from memory, by Yaḥyā Çavuş or some other interlocutor. Such a circumstance could well explain the document’s somewhat unorthodox orthography.

Both pages of the document are carefully ruled in double lines of black and red ink for two columns of text, indicating that the scribe expected additional poems to be added. This feature makes the document’s identification as part of a *cönk* all the more likely. The right margin of the document’s recto and the left margin of the verso feature tiny perforations, but these were probably added by one of the Elkan Nathan Adler collection’s curators, as in the case of other documents in this collection (see the discussion of Ch. 2, Doc. 5).

⁴¹ Karasoy and Yavuz (2003, 2017); Çavdar (2017, 2019); Özarslan and Aldemir (2020); Yavuz and Küçükballı (2020).

1.4. Transliteration Issues

Transliteration of these poems into Latin letters poses challenges relating mainly to the fact that Ottoman Turkish features more vowel sounds, particularly short vowel sounds, than modern Turkish does. Some short vowels were conventionally represented by what Redhouse (1978, xv) calls “Arabic letters of prolongation,” meaning ا, و, and ي. Thus the recurring *-yuz* syllable in the opening poem by ‘Āşık ‘Ömer is rendered يوز although it must have been pronounced with a vowel resembling the modern-day unvoiced short Turkish /u/ (see Redhouse 1978, xiv–xvi, 2119, 2177). Furthermore, short vowel sounds were not always spelled or pronounced consistently: thus *īmāndayuz* (ایمانده یوز) in recto l. 2 but *uymayız* (اومیز) in recto l. 3, whereas by the rules of modern Turkish vowel harmony, both words would end in *-yız*. Likewise, *isen* ‘if you are’ is rendered اسان in recto l. 6 but ایسان in recto l. 16. While these elements are certainly not absent in Ottoman Turkish prose documents—or in Yahyā Çavuş’s poetry, for that matter—they occur far less frequently.

2.0. Text

Paper, perforations along right margin. 160.00 mm x 270.00 mm.

Recto

Right Column

1. [Rubric:] ‘Āşık ‘Ömer

2. Evvelā kālūbelādan ‘ahd ile imāndayuz.
3. Uymayız cāhil sözüne ‘aql ile iz‘āndayuz.
4. Düşmişem gürbet eline vir murādım yā Ğanī.
5. Ulular sözi tuṭulmaz bir fenā zamāndayuz.
6. ‘Ākil isen bir mūrşidin eteğini tuṭagör.
7. Nice yıllar tekkesinde mihmān olub, yaṭagör.
8. Bunda yükledüb, metā‘nı varub, anda şaṭagör.
9. İlerüsi durmaz geçer bir ulu kervāndayuz.
10. ‘Ākil olan ‘āşıklara ma‘lūm bizim aḥvālimiz.
11. Yā ilāhī sen āsān it qabr’da su’ālimiz.
12. Bin bir ayak bir olunca, yā nice olur ḥālimiz?
13. Nefs ile şeyṭāna uyub, cürm ile ‘isyāndayuz.
14. Der ki ‘Ömer yār için āgyāra.
15. Der ki ‘Ömer ‘āşık sözlerini sen alagör.
16. Dertli isen ey gönül derdine çāre bulagör.
17. Aluben pāk abdesti beş vaḫtini kılagör.
18. Ya bugün yāḥūt yārın bir ulu dīvāndayuz.
19. [in smaller script, squeezed between the lines:]
Hā bu ğafletden uyan, bir ulu dīvāndayuz.

20. [Rubric:] ‘Āşık ‘Ömer

21. Bize sitem hancerini çekdi yār şimden gerü.

22. Yokıymış sende haķıķat yūri var şimden gerü.

[There is a large red ink rectangle between lines 22 and 23, as if a rubric has been crossed out.]

23. Kalmadı şabra mecālim çün zamān el virmedi.

24. Gönlümi yabāna atdı rüzīgār şimden gerü.

25. Tāşgın akar çāy menendi çağlarım.

26. Şoyunub, derviş misāli eġnime pos[t] bağlarım.

27. ‘Ahdine vefā kılmayān dildāri ben neyleyim?

28. Gitdi ġayret, gitdi nāmūs, gitdi ‘ār şimden gerü.

29. Söyleyin ol gül yüzli şāhıma

30. Kādrin [bil]medim baķmasun günāhıma.

31. Bunca ~~hizmet~~ [crossed out] demdīr hizmet itdim ismi
//Meħmed şāhıma//

32. Oldı aķlım tā başımdan tārūmār şimden //gerü//.

Left Column

1. Der ki ‘Ömer yār içün //āġā// yārā

2. Der ki ‘Ömer yār içün aġyāra minnet eyleme.

3. Ġam deġildir bir gül içün hāra minnet eyleme.

4. Kādir [sic] kıymet bilmeyen hārāna minnet eyleme.
5. Terk ederim harām olsun bu diyār şimden gerü.
6. [Rubric:] Yahyā Çavuş
7. Bizi yā Rab her kim hōr ider ehl-[i] vaqār olsun.
8. Qo bī-rağbet olalım biz ol ehl-[i] i'tibār olsun.
9. Kabīh ahlākla her kim bizi yād itdiyse 'ālemde
10. Hemīşe hūsn-[i] hulk ile ana rif'at şī'ār olsun.
11. Cihānda dūr[a]dūrlı gayibler içre ey Hālık.
12. Bizi her kim tezekkür etse, 'ömri pāydār olsun.
13. Bizi qahrıla her kim bī-qarār isterse 'ālemde
14. Hudā lūtf-[u] kerem ide hemīşe ber qarār olsun.
15. Bizi yokluk ile zilletde dā'im isteyen kimse
16. İlahī 'izzetin haqqı için cihān durdukça var olsun.
17. Bizi ehl-[i] felāketde ayakda qaldı kim derse
18. Sa'adet ona bāl virsün, Hudāyā tādār olsun.
19. Bizi gamgīn maḥzūn isteyenler rüzgār içre
20. Hemīşe şād hurrem, her günü faşl-ı pahār [bahār] olsun.

21. Bizi ‘ālemde her kim dirse ʿa‘n ile bī-devlet
22. Cihānda ‘izz [u] iḳbāl ile her dem aḡniyā olsun.
23. Bizi ḡaybet idüb ‘ālemde her kim ‘aybımız derse,
24. İlahī künd-i ḡaybından şadā-yı bī-şümār olsun.
25. Bizi her laḡza bī-kām isteyenler rüzgār içre
26. Murātda olmayam vāşıl tek anlar ber-murād olsun.
27. Bize her kim söḡerse rū-be-rū yā Rab her laḡza
28. Du‘ālarla senālarla ana bizden yādigār olsun.
29. Kimseye bāḳi deḡildir mülk [ü] devlet, sīm [u] zer.
30. Bir vīrān olmuş gönülün ta‘mīrin itmekdir hüner.

Lower right margin, in red ink

Yaḡyā Çavuş//sene 1172

Verso: Blank

Blank, except for the red and black borders for two columns of text.

3.0. Textual Notes

Recto

Right Column

4. *Ġanī* (غانى) ‘the wealthy’ is a name of God.
12. *Bin* ‘a thousand’ is rendered بنك instead of the conventional بيك.
16. *Gönül* (كوكل) ‘heart’ is an alternative spelling for كوكل.
18. *Yāḥūt* (ياحوت) ‘or’ is an alternative spelling for *yāḥūd* (ياخود).
24. *Rüzīgār* (روزيكار) ‘wind’ is an alternative spelling for *rüzgâr* (روزگار or روزگار).
26. *Şoyunub* is rendered صينوب (*şınub*), which would mean ‘I have been defeated’, whereas *şoyunub* (صوينوب) refers to removing one’s clothing, which fits the context.
30. *Ḳadrin [bil]medim* ‘I did not know your worth’: A conjugation of the expression *kadir bilmek*, ‘to know [someone’s] worth’, i.e., ‘to appreciate’, is probably meant. However, the word that actually appears in the place of *[bil]medim* resembles مولم (*mu’lim*), ‘painful’.
31. *Hizmet* (خدمت) ‘service’ is an alternative spelling for خدمت.

Left Column

1. //āġā// *yārā* (اغا يارا) is an alternative rendering of *āgyāra* (اغياره), '[to] other than the beloved', as in the first poem and l. 2 of the present poem.
3. *hāra* (حاره) 'to the thorn' is an alternative spelling for *hāra* (خاره).
4. *kaḍir* (قدر) 'value' is rendered *kādir* (قادر).
5. *diyār* (ديار) 'land' is rendered ديار, with an additional ي.
22. *aġniyā* (اغنيا) 'abundant' or 'rich': This is the plural form. The singular, *ġani* (غني), would seem more appropriate.
- 25, 27. *Laḥṣa* (لحضة) 'moment' is an alternative spelling for *laḥṣa* (لحظة).
30. *Hüner* (هونر) 'art' or 'skill' is an alternative spelling for هنر.

4.0. Translation

Recto

Right Column

1. [Rubric:] 'Āṣīk 'Ömer
2. First of all, we are faithful and keep the covenant of 'they said, "Of course!'"'.⁴²

⁴² This verse alludes to Qur'ān 7.172, which describes the children of Adam, before their creation, bearing witness that God is their lord. The

3. We do not conform to the words of the ignorant; with intellect, we have quick understanding.
4. I have fallen into exile. Give me my desire, o God.
5. We are in a bad time when the promises of the great are not kept.
6. If you are intelligent, grasp the skirt of the [mystical] guide.⁴³
7. Be a guest for many years in his [the guide's] Sufi lodge and sleep there.
8. Load up your goods here; sell them there.⁴⁴
9. We are in a great caravan that never stops but goes on by.
10. Our [spiritual] state is known to the intelligent *‘āṣīks* [Sufi masters].
11. O God! Make easy our questions in the grave.⁴⁵

poet quotes the Arabic phrase قالوا بلى ‘they said, “Of course! [We bear witness]”’. I am grateful to Victoria Holbrook for pointing this out.

⁴³ The sense of this and the following verse is to find a mystical guide and remain in his orbit, not necessarily to join a Sufi order literally.

⁴⁴ In this and the following verse, the mystical quest is described through the metaphor of itinerant commerce. ‘Here’ refers to the material world, ‘there’ to the hereafter. Thus the implication is that the seeker reaps in the hereafter what s/he sows in the earthly world.

⁴⁵ Referring to the questions asked of the newly buried by the angels Munkar and Nakir.

12. When a thousand and one feet become one, what will become of us?⁴⁶
13. We conform to Satan with our souls and rebel with our sins.
14. ‘Ömer [the poet] says, go to other than the beloved for the sake of the beloved.
15. ‘Ömer says, take the ‘āşık’s words.
16. If you are afflicted, o heart, find a remedy for your pain.
17. Perform pure ablutions and pray [at the prescribed] five times.
18. Any day now, we will be in a great court.⁴⁷
19. [in smaller script, squeezed between the lines:]
Wake from this heedless dream! We are in a great court.
20. [Rubric:] ‘Āşık ‘Ömer
21. The beloved has pulled his dagger of reproach on us now and forevermore.
22. ‘It turns out there is no truth in you. Go away forevermore’
[quoting the beloved].

⁴⁶ This verse refers to the Day of Judgement, when souls will be crowded together.

⁴⁷ The heavenly court is meant.

[There is a large red ink rectangle between lines 22 and 23, as if a rubric has been crossed out.]

23. I have no strength left for patience, for no time is left to me.
24. The wind has thrown my heart into the wilderness forevermore.
25. I burble like an overflowing stream.
26. I will give up everything [lit., 'remove my clothes'] and, like a dervish, don the sheepskin [lit., 'attach the sheepskin to my back'].
27. What shall I do with the beloved who does not keep his word?
28. I have given up [vain] perseverance, honour, and shame forevermore.
29. Tell my rose-faced shah:
30. I did not know your worth; don't look at my sin [i.e., forgive me].
31. Thus since that moment I have been in the orbit of [lit., 'have performed service for'] my shah whose name is Meḥmed,
32. My intelligence has reached the point that I am confused forever //more//.

Left Column

1. ‘Ömer [the poet] says, turn to other than the beloved for the sake of the beloved.
2. ‘Ömer says, don’t do favours for others for the sake of the beloved.
3. It doesn’t matter. Don’t do favours for the thorn for the sake of the rose.
4. Don’t do favours for a thorn who doesn’t know the value of things.⁴⁸
5. I am leaving this land, may it be *ḥarām*,⁴⁹ forevermore.
6. [Rubric:] Yaḥyā Çavuş
7. O God, make whoever despises us great and mighty.
8. Let us be disregarded; let them [i.e., the people who despise us] be respected.

⁴⁸ This is probably another instance of the idiom *ḡadīr bilmek*, ‘to know the worth [of]’, as in recto l. 30, but since the first word of the expression is spelled *ḡadīr* (قادر) rather than *ḡadīr* (قدیر), it is conceivable that the poet intends ‘someone who does not know God [*Ḡadīr*, the Almighty]’, although in that case قادر should have an accusative suffix.

⁴⁹ *Ḥarām*, often translated ‘utterly forbidden’, is the most severe category of wrongdoing in Islam. Thus the connotation is ‘cursed’ or ‘proscribed’, as in *herem* (חרם) in biblical Hebrew.

9. Whoever may have remembered us [as having] despicable morals in [this] world,
10. May he always be distinguished by good character and eminence.
11. [As long as we are] in the universe, we are among the lost, o Creator.
12. May whoever mentions us live forever.
13. Whoever angrily wants us to be unsettled in [this] world,
14. May God be generous to him and always let him be settled.
15. May whoever wants us always to be in poverty and abasement
16. Exist as long as the universe for the sake of almighty God's truth.
17. Whoever says of us, 'They can't find a place among the people of calamity',
18. May happiness give him honey; may he be one of God's kings.
19. Those who want us to be grief-stricken and sad at all times,
20. May they always be happy and joyful, may their every day be springtime.

21. Whoever reproaches us with misfortune in [this] world,
22. May his every moment in the universe be abundant with glory and good fortune.
23. Whoever talks behind our backs and speaks of our flaws in [this] world,
24. May there be [i.e., may he experience] countless echoes from the divine hidden world.
25. Whoever wants us not to get our desire in these times—
26. May I not get what I want; only let them get their desires.
27. Whoever curses us to our faces, o God, every moment,
28. May our prayers and praise be a souvenir from us to him.
29. No one has property and fortune, silver and gold, forever.
30. The real art is to repair a heart in ruins.

Lower right margin, in red ink

[by] Yahyā Çavuş//[in] the year 1172 [1758]

Plate XLVI: ENA 3904.13, recto. Courtesy of the Jewish Theological Seminary Library.



AFTERWORD

1.0. Continuities

Ottoman Egypt did not arise *ex nihilo*. There were significant continuities with the Mamluk Sultanate, though the political regime was not one of them.¹ Instead, the major continuities took the form that they typically take in the wake of traumatic regime change: continuities in bureaucratic usages, religious practice, socio-economic institutions, popular customs, and the like. These continuities are, inevitably, reflected in the Genizah documents.

Nowhere are these continuities more evident than in the *sharīʿa* court records that comprise nearly a quarter of the documents in this collection. Many of the judges and scribes who were present when the Ottomans conquered Egypt remained in place. They included, however, relatively recent immigrants from Ottoman and pre-Ottoman Anatolia, as well as the descendants of such immigrants. The documents that the court scribes produced followed the format of late Mamluk court documents, and the cases from the early Ottoman period involved personages and families whose experience in Egypt bridged the Mamluk and Ottoman periods. Over the years, small changes accrued to the court records: for example, the judge's *ʿalāma*—the 'signature' pious phrase at the top of each case over which a particular judge presided—became far less elaborate.²

¹ Hathaway (1997b, 9, 11, 14–16, 170–73; 2004; 2020, 52; 2022a).

² In contrast, Jewish court documents changed rather dramatically in the late Mamluk and early Ottoman periods as a result of the influx of

Through it all, the *sharīʿa* court mediated the entire spectrum of legal, commercial, fiscal, and personal transactions: sales, property transfers, debt repayment, business partnerships, marriages, inheritance, and more, between and among Jews, Muslims, and Christians. The role of the court as generator of public records in the Ottoman period reflects a new emphasis on designated, and occasionally purpose-built, court buildings where formal records of court sessions were compiled and housed (Hathaway 2020, 110–11). Meanwhile, the availability of multiple copies of case transcripts helps to explain why so many of them are preserved in the Genizah. These records constitute evidence, corroborated by witnesses, of all these various transactions and arrangements. By supplying this evidence, the *sharīʿa* courts served as repositories of collective memory that transcended confessional boundaries since all faith communities relied on them.

2.0. Transformations

2.1. Administrative Transformations

Nonetheless, and despite the undeniable continuities, the Ottoman conquest did represent a rupture with the Mamluk past, and the 400 years of Ottoman rule did transform Egyptian society. These documents testify to that transformation, especially where Egypt's Jewish population is concerned. The most obvious

Sephardic Jews expelled from the Iberian peninsula. Most notably, Hebrew replaced Judeo–Arabic as the standard language of court cases. See Arad (2025a).

change that Ottoman rule brought was a new population of government officials and members of the military, from the Ottoman governor of Egypt and the entourage of soldiers and aides who surrounded him, to regimental officers from the imperial palace, to their localised provincial counterparts, to low-ranking soldiers who formed part of the troops garrisoning Cairo's citadel. Under the Ottomans, as our documents illustrate, Jews came to be enmeshed with the military-administrative infrastructure. This reality stemmed in no small part from the economic and administrative roles that military officials routinely held in Ottoman Egypt, in some cases building upon their activities under the late Mamluk Sultanate.

Especially striking is the link between Jewish merchants and Ottoman regimental officers, both based in Egypt and stationed at the imperial palace. Economic symbiosis largely undergirds this connection. The two-tiered tax farms of port customs, beginning in the seventeenth century—whereby Jewish merchants with the title *mu'allim* handled day-to-day operations for Janissary officer *multazims*—offer the most obvious example of this symbiosis. To these we can add Salmūn al-Iskandarānī's employment of a regimental officer from the imperial capital as his agent and the sugar distribution network that the governor's *ṣarrāf* built with regimental officers and *sanjāk beyis*.

2.2. Economic Transformations

In general, Ottoman rule brought with it new opportunities for trade in a broader range of goods and commodities, and over a much larger territory, than had been possible when Egypt was

part of the Mamluk Sultanate. The fact that Egypt was now the largest province of a sprawling empire with territory on three continents meant that the bulk of its commerce occurred within that empire: with Greater Syria, with the Ottoman Maghrib, with Anatolia and the Balkans, and, of course, with the imperial capital. Beyond the Ottoman Empire's borders, new avenues of trade opened with the kingdoms and mini-empires of early modern Europe; with new African polities, including the Funj Sultanate; and with Mughal India, Safavid Iran, and Ming and Qing China. Accordingly, the trade goods that our documents detail reflect broader commercial horizons: Mediterranean coral, Sudanese gum arabic, and Anatolian firewood entered Egypt while Egyptian rice and sugar supplied the appetites of the imperial court in Istanbul.

Naturally, Egypt's ports—Damietta and Alexandria/Rosetta on the Mediterranean, Suez on the Red Sea, and Cairo's Nile ports at Būlāq and Fuṣṭāṭ/Miṣr al-Qadīma—played critical roles in this enhanced commercial exchange. Our documents clearly show robust trade through the Mediterranean ports from very early in the Ottoman period, illustrating the Ottoman agenda of facilitating trade from Egypt to the rest of the empire and from Cairo to the Mediterranean. However, they also reveal the importance of Būlāq and Fuṣṭāṭ to supplying Cairo with goods and commodities, such as firewood and sheep, from outside Egypt and from Upper Egypt. The combined effect of this new emphasis on the ports was to integrate Egypt with the rest of the Ottoman Empire and to connect Upper Egypt more firmly with Cairo and the Nile

Delta. A notable side effect, as well, was to create intense competition for the tax farms of the customs of the ports concerned. Profits from customs duties and trade served, in turn, as key sources of wealth for the households of Jewish customs directors, such as the Castros and Salmūn al-Iskandarānī, and ambitious Janissary officers, such as the Ẓazdağlıs. Further research will surely reveal that the Nile port customs, above all the double tax farm of the customs at Fuṣṭāṭ/Miṣr al-Qadīma and Būlāq, provided similar resources, as the seeming influence of the unnamed tax farmer of T-S Ar. 39.370 suggests.

Both inside and outside Ottoman territory, commodities and finished goods were increasingly exchanged for cash as the Ottoman Empire carved out a place in international commercial networks and its economy became ever more monetised. Hence business letters, salary receipts, and court documents summarising delivery of goods, debt repayment schemes, property transfers, and marriage contracts all specify the currencies in which payments are made, pledges fulfilled, and dowries delivered. Monetisation was, in addition, part and parcel of the spread of tax farming, for tax farmers purchased their revenue collection rights for cash and generally collected taxes in cash, as well. Already in the early years of Ottoman rule in Egypt, urban revenues such as port customs duties were commonly farmed, as the hegemony of Abraham Castro and his sons over the customs of Egypt's Mediterranean ports attests. Roughly a century later, Salmūn Iskandarānī was firmly ensconced as the tax farmer of Alexandria's customs while also holding nearby rural tax farms.

Meanwhile, *sanjāk beyis*, regimental officers, and Jewish merchants held the tax farms of villages throughout the Egyptian countryside, enabling the flow of commodities such as sugar through the province and out to the palace.

With the rise of Meḥmed ‘Alī Pasha and his dynasty in the nineteenth century, Egypt’s political and economic status gradually shifted from that of supporter of and supplier to the imperial centre to that of autonomous producer of both commodities and finished goods. The pasha’s household replaced the old military and administrative elite, and a new-order bureaucracy replaced the old network of tax farms. Meḥmed ‘Alī famously (or infamously) launched an industrialisation scheme to enable Egypt to produce its own weapons and textiles. Jews were heavily involved in the latter effort, as receipts from the pasha’s Alexandria silk weavery attest. In some respects, Jewish cashiers and door-keepers occupied the niches that, in previous centuries, had been filled by the banker/money-lender figures known as *ṣarrāfs*.

2.3. Transformations in Jewish Community Leadership

Tracing individual Jewish influencers in Ottoman Egypt through Genizah documents is a fairly straightforward undertaking. Where Jewish communal leadership is concerned, however, the picture grows more complex, in no small part because of the proximity of three watershed events in the history of Egypt’s Jewish community: the expulsions of Jews from Spain (1492) and Portugal (1497), the Ottoman conquest of Egypt (1517), and the abolition of the office of Ra’īs al-Yahūd shortly after the conquest.

Yet even these milestone events were the culmination of existing trends, and we should view them in that context.

Egypt had received migrants of all faiths from Iberia and North Africa for several centuries before 1492. Where Jewish luminaries are concerned, the most famous of these is, naturally, Moses Maimonides, who fled Almohad-ruled Córdoba for Fez, then ultimately migrated to Cairo in the late twelfth century CE. Additional waves of Jewish migration from these territories followed after later outbursts of anti-Jewish persecution, notably the 1391 massacres of Jews in the Christian regions of Spain. The Sholāl family, for a notable example, returned after 1391 to their Algerian homeland from Majorca, where they had taken root centuries earlier. Iberian Muslim communities likewise existed in Algiers and, above all, Tunis under Ottoman rule.³ The expulsions of the 1490s followed on these earlier population movements and brought them to a sort of logical extreme. In general, the numerical presence and socio-economic influence of Maghribi Muslims and Jews continued in Egypt through the Ottoman period.

Meanwhile, the geopolitical conflicts that erupted between the Mamluk Sultanate and the expanding Ottoman Empire during the fifteenth century fuelled additional migrations to Egypt even as they foreshadowed the Ottoman conquest of Syria and Egypt. Late Mamluk Cairo, which was the unquestioned intellectual and religious hub of the Sunni world at the time, attracted Muslim scholars from Ottoman Anatolia and from the Turkic emirates in Anatolia that the Ottomans had not yet conquered. This explains

³ Abun-Nasr (1987, 142, 149, 175–76, 178); Raymond (2006, 72–91).

how the judge ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Aḫṣarāyī (Chapter 1, Document 1) ended up in Cairo, along with quite a number of his fellow Aḫṣarāyīs. At around the same time, the early expansion of the Shi‘ite Safavid Empire in the eastern Anatolian and Azerbaijani border regions triggered further displacement and migration, including that of al-Aḫṣarāyī’s colleague, the Ḥanafī judge and chronicler ‘Abdüşşamed Diyārbekrī, to say nothing of three Azeri and Anatolian leaders of the Khalwatī/Halvetī Sufi order who established branches of the order in Cairo following their migrations (Martin 1972, 290–97).

Jewish migrations to Egypt, particularly as the Spanish Reconquista neared completion in the course of the fifteenth century, arguably prepared the ground for the abolition of the office of Ra’īs al-Yahūd. The burgeoning influx of educated and financially skilled Sephardim led to more numerous communities (*qahals*) and a consequent atomisation of communal authority, particularly at the local level. Meanwhile, the office of Ra’īs al-Yahūd itself had arguably suffered a blow to its authority with the quarter-century-long self-exile of the last Maimonidean *nagīd*, David ben Joshua, in 1375 and the subsequent collapse of the dynasty. The dynastic principle continued to apply to the office, as witness Joseph ben Khalīfa and his son and, following them, Nathan Sholāl and his nephew Isaac.⁴ Yet neither Joseph nor Nathan was able to establish a multi-generational dynasty on the order of the Maimonidean prototype.

⁴ At least two figures served as Ra’īs al-Yahūd between David ben Joshua and Joseph ben Khalīfa. Dotan Arad (2013, 89–90; 2023, 28; Arad and Wagner 2025, 40) discovered Isaac ben Joshua al-Fāṣī, who

As a result of this diffusion of communal authority, the Sholāl's were one of numerous influential Jewish families, many of them Sephardic merchant clans who had immigrated to Ottoman territory fairly recently, who wielded varying degrees of influence within the community. The two *mu'allims* whom Nathan Sholāl put in charge of the Jewish community's pious endowments in greater Cairo arguably reflect this trend, as does the rise of Abraham Castro and other Jewish customs directors, notably Salmūn al-Iskandarānī. Castro was simultaneously director of Egypt's mint while Salmūn held at least one major rural tax farm in addition to that of Alexandria's customs. In this regard, it is perhaps significant that Nathan Sholāl's nephew Isaac, who succeeded him as (the last) Ra'īs al-Yahūd, was also director of Egypt's mint (David 1972, 330; Mazor 2021, 262, 266), as it were foreshadowing the role played by Castro in the post-nagidate period. As the distinction between rabbi and merchant diminished, so, too, did the distinction between *nagīd* and *mu'allim*. Thus the Ottoman abolition of the office represented not a radical rupture with the immediate past but confirmation of the encroachment on the *nagīd*'s authority of influential merchants.

was Ra'īs in the 1420s. Mark Cohen (1984, 436–37, 444, citing the chronicle of al-ʿAynī; see also Arad and Wagner 2025, 41–42) notes that the Mamluk succession struggle of 1438 focused on rival candidates for Ra'īs al-Yahūd: the new sultan Jaqmaq's candidate vs. the candidate of the late Sultan Barsbay's son. Jaqmaq's candidate may have been ʿAbd al-Laṭīf ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Shams, the physician whom the Rabbanite community later accused of causing the 1442 crisis.

By the same token, the introduction of the office of Ḥāḥām Başı toward the end of the period covered by our documents represents an affirmation of an ongoing trend toward bureaucratisation of communal leadership, in line with the Europeanising *Tanzīmāt* reforms of the mid- to late nineteenth century. Thus the title Ḥāḥām Başı was apparently applied to Ḥayyim Benyakār, the leading rabbi in Istanbul in the early nineteenth century, even before the official introduction of the office in 1835, following Benyakār's death. At the same time, regional chief rabbis continued to function even after the implementation of the new empire-wide rabbinical authority. Just as the title *Ra'īs al-Yahūd* and the authority of the office took hold gradually over the course of the eleventh century CE (Cohen 1980, chaps. 4–6), so the post of Ḥāḥām Başı took years, perhaps even decades, to reach final form.

3.0. The Genizah as a Source for Muslim History

S.D. Goitein habitually stressed that the medieval Genizah could serve as a source for the history of Egyptian and Mediterranean society in general, that it was not simply a record of the region's Jewish community (Goitein 1967, 27–28, 70–74). By this he meant primarily that scholars can extrapolate from the circumstances of the Jewish community, as reflected in the Genizah documents, to Egyptian society as a whole, regardless of confessional differences. That observation obviously holds true for the early modern period, as well. But what the present collection of documents also suggests is that the Genizah contains a critical mass of documents that emanate from the Muslim community and that

concern Muslims predominantly or exclusively. The transfer of the house in Ḥārat Zuwayla (Chapter 4, Document 1), the letter to Muḥammad ibn Baghdād (Chapter 3, Document 1), and the Maghribī marriage contract (Chapter 5, Document 1) all fit this description. Naturally, we would expect to find documents concerning Muslims primarily among Arabic-script documents, of which there are hundreds, if not thousands, in the Genizah. Of these, some, such as the marriage contract, may not come from the Ben Ezra Synagogue or other synagogues or cemeteries in greater Cairo, but may have been acquired from alternative sources. Certain Genizah collections, such as Manchester and the ENA classification at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, contain more of these externally-sourced documents than other collections simply because the collectors for whom the funds were named ranged beyond Cairo, and often beyond Egypt, in their quests for manuscripts.⁵ Regardless, these considerations underline the importance of the Genizah as a source for the economic and social history of the Muslim population of Egypt and the broader Mediterranean region.

4.0. The Number of Turkish Documents

When I started this project, I was aware of only one document in Ottoman Turkish in the entire Genizah: an Arabic–Turkish mini-dictionary published by Dotan Arad (2017b). Since then, thanks in large part to alerts by members of the Princeton Geniza Pro-

⁵ E.g., Jefferson (2022, 54, 93, 100, 112–15, 139, 157–58, 162, 175, 184, 191–207).

ject, I have come to realise that the Genizah includes tens of Turkish documents. These comprise, of course, only a tiny fraction of the overall corpus, but they are nonetheless not insignificant. Many of these documents take the form of letters to various Ottoman officials and thus reflect the mediation of professional scribes trained in the flowery, flattering idiom of that genre. Yet they also include poetry, basic instructions for Muslim practice, and personal letters to Salmūn al-Iskandarānī, the powerful director of Alexandria's customs. Collectively, these documents suggest a comfort level with Ottoman Turkish that we might not have expected in Ottoman Egypt among either Jews or Muslims. Admittedly, regular use of Turkish was probably largely limited to members of the governing bureaucracy, such as *şarrāfs*, but Salmūn's example also suggests that influential merchants who were not long-term government officials—above all those with connections to the military and to officials in the imperial capital—also acquired the language and used it.

Naturally, the Judeo-Arabic documents from the Ottoman period can only add detail and nuance to these patterns.⁶ There are also a small number of documents in Judeo-Turkish,⁷ indi-

⁶ E.g., Rylands Genizah fragment A 130-1, a Judeo-Arabic poem in praise of Süleyman 'the Magnificent', and ENA NS 31.13, an undated Judeo-Arabic letter describing a business partnership between a Jewish merchant and a Janissary, as well as trade in wine. My thanks to Marina Rustow for alerting me to the first document and to Dr Ekaterina Pukhovaia for alerting me to the second.

⁷ E.g., T-S AS 201.93, which features a Hebrew text praising King Don Pedro (Pedro I of Castile, a.k.a. 'The Cruel', r. 1350–69) on the recto

cating a rare comfort level in Turkish among certain Jews in Ottoman Egypt. Whether these would have been transplants from the Ottoman central lands, locals who acquired the language because of government service, or some mixture is, regrettably, unclear. Regardless, what these findings indicate is that Ottoman-era Genizah documents can serve as supplements to more conventional Ottoman archival documents and narrative chronicles in both Ottoman Turkish and Arabic as sources for all facets of life in Ottoman Egypt.

and, on the verso, five lines of Judeo-Turkish at the top, then a Hebrew book list perpendicularly at the bottom. See also Krivoruchko (2012) on T-S AS 215.255 (dated 1758, the Julian/CE date), a document in Karamanlı, a central Anatolian dialect of Turkish written in Greek letters.

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About the Team

Alessandra Tosi and Geoffrey Khan were the managing editors for this book and provided quality control.

Tamar Karni performed the copyediting of the book in Word. The fonts used in this volume are Charis SIL, Scheherazade New and SBL Hebrew.

Annie Hine created all of the editions—paperback, hardback, and PDF.

Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal designed the cover of this book. The cover was produced in InDesign using Fontin and Calibri fonts.

Ottoman-Era Documents from the Cairo Genizah

Jane Hathaway

This groundbreaking volume marks a rare and transformative contribution to studies of the Cairo Genizah, a vast trove of documents generated by Egypt's Jewish community between the 10th and 19th centuries. While the Cairo Genizah has long yielded extraordinary insights into Jewish history in the greater Mediterranean region, attention has focused overwhelmingly on documents from the 'classical' period (11th–13th centuries). Documents from the later period, when Egypt was ruled by the Mamluk Sultanate and the Ottoman Empire, remain woefully underexplored. This book helps to change that, presenting a meticulously curated collection of later Genizah documents that expand the boundaries of current scholarship.

Moving beyond the more familiar Hebrew and Judaeo-Arabic texts, the author ventures into neglected terrain, offering expert translations of Arabic and Ottoman Turkish texts in Arabic script. The collection is rich with remarkable 'firsts', including a Jewish funerary prayer on the reverse of a letter from a military commander, fragments of Sufi poetry, and a primer on Muslim practice. The author uses her training in Ottoman history to analyse and contextualise these documents fully. As a result, each document opens new avenues of inquiry, linking Egypt's Jewish community to wider intra- and intercommunal networks in the Ottoman Empire and beyond.

With a lucid introduction, well-structured chapters, and a thoughtful conclusion, the book illuminates networks of exchange in the early modern Mediterranean. It will appeal to scholars of Jewish history, the Cairo Genizah, the Ottoman Empire, and early modern Egypt; students of Middle Eastern languages and religions; historians of intercommunal relations and trade; and librarians, archivists, and general readers fascinated by Middle Eastern manuscript culture and the vibrant religious and commercial networks of the early modern Mediterranean.

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