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# Arabic Documents from Medieval Nubia

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## 8. LISTS OF COMMODITIES

### 8.1. Arabic–English

*‘ar‘ar* juniper (9r:18)

*‘asīl al-riyāḥ* extract of fragrant herbs (42r, right, 13)

*‘imāmatayn bi-juhūf* two turbans in a bucket (4r:5)

*‘ūd* aloes, aromatic wood (29r:14, 36v:4)

*‘uṣfur* safflower, carthamus tinctorius L., a yellow dye (42r, right, 2)

*barrāya* pen-knife (31v:1)

*bunāk* nascaphthon (15v:5)

*burd* striped or variegated garment (21r, margin, 1)

*damk sayr* thong of twisted leather (37v:1–2)

*faras* mare | *farasan jayyidatan* ‘a mare of excellent quality’ (22r:17)

*firāš* bed, mattress (29r:10, v:6) | *firāšayn ‘amal ‘Irāq* ‘two beds of Iraqi workmanship’ (2v:1)

*ġarz* sprigs (29r:15)

*ġilāla* tunic | two tunics (*al-ġilālatayn*) for half a dīnār (29r:11, 29v:2), two tunics (*al-ġilālatayn*) for twenty-four dirhams (42r, left, 3)

*ġirbāl al-‘uṣfur* sieve for safflower (42r, right, 4)

*hāl* cardamon (9r:16; 43v:7)

*ḥalāwa* sweets | *sallat ḥalāwa* small basket of sweets (13v:5–6)

*ḥallat šarb* basket drinking vessel (13v:5)

*ḥalqa dahab* ring, gold (36r:5)

*haraš* cloth, coarse (34r:8)

- ḥaṣīra* straw mat (51v:3)  
*ḥaṭab* fire wood (51v:4)  
*ḥiṣān* horse (9v:12)  
*ḥitta* cloth, piece (31r:10)  
*jubba* sleeved garment (37r:18)  
*kāfūr* camphor (9r:16)  
*kimāmāt* muzzles (23r:4, 5)  
*kummayn* sleeves (51v:4)  
*kurkum* Indian saffron (43r, middle, 6)  
*ḵall* vinegar (15v:3; 51v:3)  
*ḵaraz* beads (29r:14, 16; 37v:1)  
*ḵariṭa* bag (9v:20; 37v:3)  
*ḵayl* horses (22r:6, 9, 18; 23r:14, 19; 33:16)  
*ḵayyāṭa* verbena nodiflora (42r, right, 14)  
*ḵūḍa* helmet (31v:1; 37r:19)  
*kurūk* pieces of calico (5r, margin, 5)  
*lāḍan* laudanum (9r:16)  
*lubān* frankincense (43r, right, 4)  
*majlis* seat (4r:5)  
*mal'a* cloak (49v:10)  
*maqāṭi'* pieces of cloth (2r:6; 13v:5; 42r, left, 1)  
*marsīn* myrtle (9r:17)  
*maṣṭakī* mastic tree gum (9r:16)  
*may'a* storax (43r, middle, 1)  
*may'at ward* rose liquid (9r:17)  
*miḵadda* pillow (49v:10)  
*milaffa* head-cloth (49v:10; 51v:4)  
*milḥ* salt (9r:18; 51v:3)

- mindīl* kerchief (49v:10)  
*mišāṭ* combs (51v:4)  
*muʿnat al-miṣbāḥ* supplies for a lamp (42r, right, 9)  
*murr* myrrh (43r, right, 9)  
*musaqqaʿ* dyed garment (36v:2)  
*nuʿmā mulawwan* coloured luxury item (29r:13)  
*nuqūb* veils (34r:10)  
*qamḥ* wheat (18r:4, 8; 51v:4)  
*qamiṣ* shirt (37r:18)  
*qaṭīfa* velvet (49v:11, 12)  
*qazz* raw silk (51v:3)  
*qirbatayn* water-skins (37r:21)  
*qirfa* cinnamon (9r:17; 29r:15)  
*qiṣr* clothing (49r:10; 49v:9)  
*qufl nuḥās* lock, brass (29r:16)  
*qumāš* fabric (21r:7)  
*qurṭum* cartham seed (43v:1)  
*qurub* scabbards (31v:1)  
*quṣṭ, quṣṭ* costus (aromatic plant) (9r:17; 43r, right, 7)  
*quṭn* cotton (35r:5)  
*ridāʾ* mantle (49v:11)  
*riwā* (= *riwāʾ*) rope for binding a load (29r:15)  
*rumḥ* spear (31v:1)  
*rumm* bedding (37r:19)  
*safaṭ* basket (43v:3)  
*salla* small basket (13v:5)  
*saqāʾ bi-rasm al-miṣbāḥ* fuel for a lamp (42r, right, 7)  
*sukkar* sugar (9r:15)

- sunbul* spikenard (9r:18; 15v:3; 43r, middle, 4)  
*šabba* alum (9r:17)  
*šajara* (odiferous) shrub (43r, right, 1)  
*šakka* chain of gold coins (31v:6)  
*šamla liḫāfa li-l-šūf* cloak of wool (43r, middle, 8)  
*šumūʿ* candles (29r:13)  
*šuqqa* oblong piece of garment (21r, margin, 1)  
*šūf ʿazraq* wool, blue (34r:8)  
*šūf ʿaskarī* army wool (43v:4)  
*šuffāt* saddle pads (31v:6)  
*šundūq* box (9v:20)  
*ṭawb* garment, clothing (18r:2–3; 31r:10)  
*tawbayn* (= *ṭawbayn*) *ḫarīr mumazzaj* garments of mixed silk (2r:5)  
*ṭiyāb qūṣī* Qūṣī garments (42r, right, 11)  
*ṭarrāḥa* mattress (13v:6)  
*ṭīb* scented goods (9r:12; 15r:14; 37v:3)  
*wabar* fur | *šāḥib al-wabar* fur merchant (29r:11)  
*wisb* herbs (29r:15)  
*zabād* perfume extracted from civet cats (29r:13)  
*zaʿfarān* saffron (29r:12, 14)  
*zayt ṭīb* aromatic oil (9r:18)  
*zayt al-jawz* walnut oil (51v:3)  
*zift* bitumen (9v:20; 20r:4–5; 43v:2)  
*zubda* butter (9r:16)  
*zujāj* glass (29v:2)  
*zunnār* belt (49v:10)

## 8.2. English–Arabic

- aloes (‘ūd) (29r:14; 36v:4)
- alum (šabba) (9r:17)
- aromatic oil (zayt ṭīb) (9r:18)
- bag (al-ḵarīṭa) (37v:3)
- basket (safat) (43v:3)
- basket drinking vessel (ḥallat šarb) (13v:5)
- beads (ḵaraz) (29r:14, 16; 37v:1)
- bed (firāš) (29r:10, v:6) | firāšayn ‘amal ‘Irāq ‘two beds of Iraqi workmanship’ (2v:1)
- bedding (al-rumm) (37r:19)
- belt (zunnār) (49v:10)
- bitumen (zift) (9v:20; 20r:4–5; 43v:2)
- box (šundūq) (9v:20)
- butter (zubda) (9r:16)
- calico (kurūk) (5r, margin, 5)
- camphor (kāfūr) (9r:16)
- candles (šumū‘) (29r:13)
- cardamon (hāl) (9r:16; 43v:7)
- cartham seed (qurṭum) (43v:1)
- chain of gold coins (al-šakka) (31v:6)
- cinnamon (qirfa) (9r:17; 29r:15)
- cloak (mal’a) (49v:10)
- cloak of wool (šamla lifāfa li-l-šūf) (43r, middle, 8)
- cloth, coarse (ḥaraš) (34r:8)
- cloth, piece (al-ḥitta) (31r:10)
- clothing (al-ṭawb) (18r:2–3; 31r:10)
- clothing (qišr) (49r:10; 49v:9)

- combs (*mišāṭ*) (51v:4)
- costus (aromatic plant) (*quṣṭ*, *quṣṭ*) (9r:17; 43r, right, 7)
- cotton (*quṭn*) (35r:5)
- dyed garment (*musaqqaʿ*) (36v:2)
- extract of fragrant herbs (*ʿasīl al-riyāḥ*) (42r, right, 13)
- fabric (*qumāš*) (21r:7)
- frankincense (*lubān*) (43r, right, 4)
- fuel for a lamp (*saqāʾ bi-rasm al-miṣbāḥ*) (42r, right, 7)
- fur (*wabar*) | *ṣāḥib al-wabar* fur merchant (29r:11)
- glass (*zujāj*) (29v:2)
- head-cloth (*milaffa*) (49v:10; 51v:4)
- helmet (*al-kūḍa*) (31v:1; 37r:19)
- herbs (*wisb*) (29r:15)
- horse (*ḥiṣān*) (9v:12)
- horses (*kayl*) (22r:6, 9, 18; 23r:14, 19; 33:16)
- juniper (*ʿarʿar*) (9r:18)
- kerchief (*mindīl*) (49v:10)
- laudanum (*lāḍan*) (9r:16)
- leather bag (*karīṭa*) (9v:20)
- lock, brass (*qufl nuḥās*) (29r:16)
- luxury item, coloured (*nuʿmā mulawwan*) (29r:13)
- mantle (*ridāʾ*) (49v:11)
- mare (*faras*) | *farasan jayyidatan* ‘a mare of excellent quality’ (22r:17)
- mastic tree gum (*maṣṭakī*) (9r:16)
- mat of straw (*ḥaṣīra*) (51v:3)
- mattress (*tarrāḥa*) (13v:6)
- muzzles (*al-kimāmāt*) (23r:4, 5)



- myrrh (*murr*) (43r, right, 9)  
 myrtle (*marsīn*) (9r:17)  
 nascaphthon (*bunāk*) (15v:5)  
 oblong piece of garment (*šuqqa*) (21r, margin, 1)  
 odiferous shrub (*šajara*) (43r, right, 1)  
 pen-knife (*al-barrāya*) (31v:1)  
 perfume extracted from civet cats (*zabād*) (29r:13)  
 pieces of cloth (*maqāṭiʿ*) (2r:6; 13v:5; 42r, left, 1)  
 pillow (*miḳadda*) (49v:10)  
 Qūṣī garments (*ṭiṭyāb qūṣī*) (42r, right, 11)  
 ring, gold (*al-ḥalqa al-ḍahab*) (36r:5)  
 rope for binding a load (*riwā* = *riwāʿ*) (29r:15)  
 rose liquid (*mayʿat ward*) (9r:17)  
 saddle pads (*ṣuffāt*) (31v:6)  
 safflower (*ʿuṣfur*) (42r, right, 2)  
 saffron (*al-zaʿfarān*) (29r:12, 14)  
 saffron, Indian (*kurkum*) (43r, middle, 6)  
 salt (*milḥ*) (9r:18; 51v:3)  
 scabbards (*qurub*) (31v:1)  
 scented goods (*al-ṭīb*) (9r:12; 15r:14; 37v:3)  
 seat (*majlis*) (4r:5)  
 shirt (*al-qamiṣ*) (37r:18)  
 sieve for safflower (*ḡirbāl al-ʿuṣfur*) (42r, right, 4)  
 silk | garments of mixed silk (*tawbayn ḥarīr mumazzaj*) (2r:5)  
 silk, raw (*qazz*) (51v:3)  
 sleeves (*kummayn*) (51v:4)  
 sleeved garment (*al-jubba*) (37r:18)  
 spear (*al-rumḥ*) (31v:1)

spikenard (*sunbul*) (9r:18; 15v:3; 43r, middle, 4)  
 sprigs (*ġarż*) (29r:15)  
 storax (*mayʿa*) (43r, middle, 1)  
 striped garment (*burd*) (21r, margin, 1)  
 sugar (*sukkar*) (9r:15)  
 supplies for a lamp (*muʿnat al-miṣbāḥ*) (42r, right, 9)  
 sweets (*ḥalāwa*) | *sallat ḥalāwa* small basket of sweets (13v:5–6)  
 thong of twisted leather (*al-damk al-sayr*) (37v:1–2)  
 tunic (*ġilāla*) | two tunics (*al-ġilālatayn*) for half a dīnār (29r:11,  
 v:2), two tunics (*al-ġilālatayn*) for twenty-four dirhams  
 (42r, left, 3)  
 turban | two turbans in a bucket (*ʿimāmatayn bi-juḥūf*) (4r:5)  
 veils (*al-nuqūb*) (34r:10)  
 velvet (*qaṭīfa*) (49v:11, 12)  
 verbena nodiflora (*kayyāṭa*) (42r, right, 14)  
 vinegar (*kall*) (15v:3; 51v:3)  
 walnut oil (*zayt al-jawz*) (51v:3)  
 water-skins (*al-qirbatayn*) (37r:21)  
 wheat (*qamḥ*) (18r:4, 8; 51v:4)  
 wood for fire (*al-ḥaṭab*) (51v:4)  
 wool, blue (*ṣūf ʿazraq*) (34r:8)  
 wool, army (*ṣūf ʿaskarī*) (43v:4)

Several of the aromatic herbs and substances among the commodities listed above originated in India and East Asia. These would have been imported to Egypt by the Red Sea trade, most likely through the port of ʿAydāb. Aswan and Qūṣ were the main Nile terminals of import trade from ʿAydāb. This Red Sea port also carried most of the pilgrim traffic from Egypt and other parts

of Africa to the Ḥijāz, since the more northerly routes were threatened by the Franks (Sartain 1993, 6).

The commodities that were imported from India are mentioned in letters preserved in the Genizah of Jewish merchants who conducted trade in India and further east, e.g.,

‘ūd aloes, aromatic wood; cf. Goitein and Friedman (2007, 110).

*hāl* cardamon; cf. Goitein and Friedman (2007, 59, 61)

*kāfūr* camphor; cf. Goitein and Friedman (2007, 288).

*qirfa* cinnamon; cf. Goitein and Friedman (2007, 261)

‘uṣfur safflower, *carthamus tinctorius* L., yellow dye; cf. Goitein and Friedman (2007, 562).

Some of the commodities are likely to have been imported from Arabia, such as frankincense (*lubān*) and myrrh (*murr*). Others were imported from the north, such as storax (*may‘a*), which was an aromatic resin obtained from trees in Asia Minor, used in perfume and medicine.

