

Cambridge Semitic Languages and Cultures

# Arabic Documents from Medieval Nubia

GEOFFREY KHAN



UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE

Faculty of Asian and Middle  
Eastern Studies



<https://www.openbookpublishers.com>

©2024 Geoffrey Khan



This work is licensed under an Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0). This license allows you to share, copy, distribute, and transmit the text; to adapt the text for non-commercial purposes of the text providing attribution is made to the authors (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work). Attribution should include the following information:

Geoffrey Khan, *Arabic Documents from Medieval Nubia*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0391>

Further details about CC BY-NC licenses are available at  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

All external links were active at the time of publication unless otherwise stated and have been archived via the Internet Archive Wayback Machine at  
<https://archive.org/web>

Any digital material and resources associated with this volume will be available at  
<https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0391#resources>

Semitic Languages and Cultures 24

ISSN (print): 2632-6906

ISSN (digital): 2632-6914

ISBN Paperback: 978-1-80511-230-3

ISBN Hardback: 978-1-80511-231-0

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978-1-80511-232-7

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0391

Cover image: Fortress of Qasr Ibrim - on a cliff above the Nile in Nubia. Print from David Roberts' *Egypt & Nubia* (London: F.G. Moon, 1846-49), v. 2, pt 5. Library of Congress, Reproduction number LC-USZC4-3998, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fortress\\_of\\_Ibrim--Nubia-David\\_Roberts.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fortress_of_Ibrim--Nubia-David_Roberts.jpg).

Cover design: Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal

The main fonts used in this volume are Charis SIL, Scheherazade New, SBL Greek, and Segoe UI Historic.

## 10. SLAVES AND SERVANTS

### 10.1. *Raqīq, Riqq*

The terms *raqīq* and *riqq* are used to refer to slaves in bondage who were delivered by the eparch to the Muslims. The words are typically used as collective terms and specific individuals are expressed by the numerical classifier *ra*'s 'head':

As for slaves (*al-raqīq*), there is nothing in Aswan. (37v:4–5)

Then I wrote to you concerning the condition of the two slaves (*al-ra'sayn al-raqīq*) that my debtor 'Abū al-Ḍubā' (should have) sent me, but he has not sent them to me. (4r, margin, 3–5)

Your servant has seen the two slaves (*al-ra'sayn al-raqīq*). If it were not for the fact that he has stayed and the people would hear that I had returned them, I would have sent them to you. (9r, margin, 8–10)

Letter 24 refers to a *raqīq* that the eparch bestowed (*'an'amathu*) upon the writers, but they complain that she was sick. This indicates that the slaves were given in an exchange of diplomatic gifts, which the Muslims expected would reciprocate the value of the goods that they delivered to the eparch:

They inform him that the slave (*al-ra's al-raqīq*) whom he bestowed (*'an'amathu*) upon his slaves (*mamālikihā*, i.e., the writers of this letter) through the agency of Bazilī was sick (*marīḍa* sg.f), and that his slaves (*mamālikihā*, i.e., the writers) wanted to return her. (24r:6–8)

The feminine gender agreement of *al-ra's al-raḡiq* in the preceding passage indicates that the term referred to a female slave.

Letter **24** also contains a reference to a *riqq* whom the eparch could send to the north on an errand:

But you know that you do not have any slaves (*al-riqq*) to send to the northern land to receive news. (24v:3–4)

## 10.2. *Waṣīf* (m.), *Waṣīfa* (f.)

These terms are used in the letters to refer to individual slaves that were delivered by the eparch to the Muslims. In all cases, a single slave is mentioned, not groups of slaves. As with the *raḡiq/riqq*, slaves designated with these terms were received by the Muslims in exchange for the delivery of goods to the eparch and subsequently sold by the Muslims for cash:

The letter of the Master of the Horses and vizier of the king... has arrived and another letter for the elder 'Abū al-Ṭāhir ibn Tarīk, in both of which you mention the dispatch of the slave (*waṣīf*) and his sale. When your servant informed me that you needed the goods, I delivered him (the slave) to the broker and he auctioned him and acquired (the offer of) five dīnārs. (9r:2–9)

He (the eparch) stated that he has sent to me a female slave (*waṣīfa*)... she has not reached me in his consignment so that I may take possession of her, my honour, Master of the Horses, and I shall not correspond with you nor give you consignments of cloth as gifts until what you send is at my disposal. (4r:3–8)

Your two companions have seen my (the eparch's) messenger (*rasūlī*) whom I sent in connection with the slave (*al-waṣīfa*). (17r:9–10)

The terms *waṣīf* and *waṣīfa* designated slaves who were destined for domestic service, including child slaves (Goitein 1967, 131; Rāḡīb 2006, II:23–25). Bridal dowries in the Genizah sometimes include one or more *waṣīfa*. Perry (forthcoming) suggests that the term in such a context should be translated 'lady-in-waiting' and that it designated a less menial role than that of a *jāriya*. Ibn Buṭlān (d. 458 AH/1066 AD), in his work on slaves and slave girls (*Risāla*, 376), stated that Nubian women made devoted domestic servants.

### 10.3. *Ġulām*

People referred to by the term *ġulām* (pl. *ġilmān*) are frequently encountered in the letters of the corpus.

The following passage refers to a *ġulām* who was the son of a slave girl, so the *ġulām* would also have had the status of a slave:

They (the writers) inform him (the eparch) that... the slave girl (*al-jāriya*) and her son, Rāhim, your slave boy (*ġulāmaka*), were examined before purchase three times but she and her son have died. (24r:6–10)

When the name of the *ġulām* is mentioned, this is always a personal name (Arabic: *ism*) without any indication of genealogy, which is the normal naming practice of slaves in medieval Arabic letters:

Bišr (20r:4)

Ipisi (14r:8; 16r:3)

Jawhar (4r:4)

Kablām (9r:24)

Mārīkura (4v:1; 6r:4; 9v:19)

Mun‘im (2r:4)

Ramaḍān (30r, margin, 7)

Šarīf (7r:4)

Yaḥyā (22r:18, v:8)

I, therefore, translate all occurrences of *ḡulām* as ‘slave boy’. The term *ḡulām* is used in medieval sources with the sense of both free servants and slave servants (Sourdél et al. 2012). Many sources, however, treat *ḡilmān* as the male equivalent of *jawārī* ‘slave girls’, e.g., al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255 AH/869 AD), *Muqaddimat Mufāḵarat al-Jawārī wa-l-Ḡilmān* ‘Introductory Treatise on the Vaunting Contest of Slave Girls and Slave Boys’ (see Ayalon 1985). Although I translate the term *ḡulām* as ‘slave boy’ to distinguish it from other terms for slaves and servants, it is important to note that it was used to refer to males of all ages, not only young men, just as the term *jāriya* was used to refer to women of all ages (Rāḡīb 2006, II:24).

Slave boys (*ḡilmān*) were working slaves and are not referred to as items of diplomatic or commercial exchange. They were sent by merchants to convey goods and letters:

The bearer of this letter, who is (called) Mun‘im, one of my slave boys (*ḡilmānī*), has come to you carrying two garments of mixed silk and four pieces of cloth for the Master of the Horses. (2r:4–6)

I have sent my slave boy (*ġulāmī*) Mārīkura. Deliver to him the two slaves who are for 'Abū al-Ḍubā'. (4v:1)

The bearer of this (letter) is my loyal and respectful companion, Oua, who is my servant (*kādīm*). I have sent him with my slave boy (*ġulāmī*) Mārīkura. (6r:3–4)

I have sent my slave boy (*ġulāmī*), who is called Šarīf, with a brown camel to his honourable presence. (7r:3–4)

Send the slave boys of mine (*ġirmānī*, a phonetic variant of *ġilmānī*) who have my goods, namely 'Abū 'Abd Allāh and Mārīkura, send (them) by the road. (9v:18–19)

In letter **18**, the eparch indicates that the slave boy of the Muslim recipient has received goods:

As for the seeds of wheat, I (the eparch) have delivered to your slave ('*abdika*) six irdabbs minus a third without any waste. Your slave boy (*ġulāmuka*) has received them. (18r:5)

This passage also refers to '*abdika* 'your slave', which designates a person in the service of the writer. It appears that the '*abd*' was based in Ibrīm and the *ġulām* was travelling between the eparch and the writer.

Letter **9** refers to the sending of a *ġulām* to carry out business in the court of the king:

What I wish to inform the Ikšīl of is that my slave boy Kablām has arrived at the court of the king, but he (the king) has shown little gratitude for what I have undertaken for him. I am owed by the king two horses. He has sent me two good-for-nothing, aged servant women and six dinārs. (9r:23–26)

Letters **14** and **20** refer to a *ġulām* of the eparch:

A letter has reached me by the hand of your slave boy (*ġulāmiḥā*) Ipisi and I wrote a reply to it. (14r:7–8)

His slave boy (*ġulāmuḥu*), Bišr, arrived on Wednesday as I was leaving for the land of Nubia. I found in it (the letter) that the Master of the Horses sent three *dīnārs* and I asked on your behalf for bitumen to be bought for you before I left the land. (20r:4–6)

#### 10.4. *Jāriya*

The term *jāriya* is used to denote a female slave who was delivered to the Muslims in exchange for goods. A *jāriya* in the corpus was not exactly the feminine equivalent of a *ġulām*, who was a working slave and not an item of exchange. I translate the term *jāriya* ‘slave girl’. It did not necessarily, however, designate only young girls, as the following passage from letter 9 shows (cf. Rāġib 2006, II:23):

I am owed by the king two horses. He has sent me two good-for-nothing, aged slave women (*jāriyatayn* ‘*ajāyiz*) and six *dīnārs*. (9r:25–26)

They were considered to be a different category of slave from a *waṣīfa*, since the two terms are sometimes used in coordination as in the following passage:

I have taken note of it and the fact that he stated that he has sent to me a female slave (*waṣīfa*), and has sent to me a slave girl (*jāriya*) with Jawhar, and that I have only been able to send to him two turbans with difficulty and a seat. (4r:3–5)

This passage and the following passage indicate clearly the practice of exchanging slaves for goods.



I have sent a slave girl (*jāriya*) with ʾIbrāhīm (as payment) for what is owed together with her two children. (17r:5–6)

The writer of letter 31 says that he has arrived in Aswan and instructs the addressee to convey to him a slave girl from Nubia:

When you come down the river, bring with you the slave girl (*al-jāriya*) to me. (31v:3)

The writer of letter 37 reports that there are no slaves in the markets in Aswan and instructs the recipient to bring a slave girl downriver:

As for slaves, there is nothing in Aswan, or only a few. By God, bring your slave girl (*jāriyataka*) with you. (37r:4–6)

Slaves and slave girls can be vulnerable to loss by illness, as seen in 24:

They (the writers) inform him (the eparch) that... the slave girl (*al-jāriya*) and her son, Rāhim, your slave boy (*ḡulāmaka*), were examined before purchase three times but she and her son have died. (24r:6–10)

### 10.5. *ʿAbd*

In the corpus the term *ʿabd* (pl. *ʿabīd*) is not used to refer to a slave that was an item of diplomatic or commercial exchange, but rather to designate people who are subordinate to a master and typically work as his functionaries. Most references to the *ʿabīd* of Muslim merchants imply that they are based in Nubia:

I wrote to you concerning the condition of my slaves (*ʿabīd*) but you did not reply. (4r, margin, 2)

I would like a letter to be sent to all the administrators requesting them to protect the places (*mawāḍiʿ*) of Lāmiʿ and his slaves (*wa-ʿabīdihī*) and likewise my places and my slaves (*ʿabīdī*). (16r:13–14)

The writer of letter **8** requests the eparch to grant ‘the leader’ (*qāʿid*) Ḥasan, the son of the leader Šujāʿ al-Dawla, the same status as his *ʿabīd* with regard to protection:

The Ikšīl does not need my recommendation with regard to him (the bearer of the letter) or my reassurances to show him respect and treat him well, and grant him the status of those of my personal slaves (*ʿabīdī al-kašīšin*) that are similar to him with regard to care, guardianship, supervision and protection. (8r:8–11)

As discussed in §10.3, the passage below from letter **8** suggests that the *ʿabd* of the Muslim writer that is referred to was based in Nubia, whereas the *ḡulām* was a travelling functionary:

As for the seeds of wheat, I (the eparch) have delivered to your slave (*ʿabdika*) six irdabbs minus a third without any waste. Your slave boy (*ḡulāmuka*) has received them. (18r:5)

It is possible that both the *ʿabd* and the *ḡulām* had the status of working slaves and the distinction in terminology reflects their different functions. By the Fatimid period, the term *ʿabd* was applied specifically to black slaves (Goitein 1967, 131; Pipes 1981, 195; Rāḡīb 2006, II:24), so this may also be a factor in the distinction in the terminology here.

Some letters refer to functionaries of the eparch by the term *ʿabīd*:

He has a right to your customary protection, so that he is able to have access to the administrators (*al-wulāh*) and others of your slaves and servants (*‘abidihā wa-ḳadamatihā*). (14r:5–6)

He entered Aswan and gathered the slaves of Darmā (*jami‘ ‘abid Darmā*; i.e., the people in the service of Darmā). (23r:9)

In letter 16, there is a reference to the slaves (*‘abid*) of the Master of the Horses, but since the writer is asking for their protection, it appears that they are the staff of the Muslim writer who are subject to the authority and protection of the eparch:

As for the slaves (*‘abid*) of the Master of the Horses, please take care of them and provide them with their needs. (16r:10–11)

The term *‘abd* is also used as a term of politeness by writers when they refer to themselves in letters to people of superior rank. A conspicuous example of this practice is letter 27 to the secretary of Uruwī, e.g.,

The slave (*al-‘abd*) asks my honourable master, the sublime elder, the secretary, may God cause his strength to endure, to kiss the hands of my sublime master, the Master of the Horses, (U)ruwī the son of my sublime master [Īsū] (the slave writing the letter being) his (the eparch’s) slave and the slave of his father (*‘abduhu wa-‘abd ‘abūhu*) before him, and informs him (the secretary) that the letter of your honour has reached his slave (*‘abdihi*) and he has read it. (27r:2–5)

### 10.6. *Kādim*

The term *kādim* (pl. *kadama*, *kuddām*) is used in the letters to refer to functionaries of Muslims or of the eparch. They had greater responsibilities than functionaries called *ʿabīd* and were higher in rank, as is seen from the following passages:

I have sent my slave boy (*ḡulāmī*), who is called Šarīf, with a brown camel to his honourable presence.... So take the camel and do not cause him (i.e., Šarīf, my slave boy) to be delayed by a single day. Send him to Papa, my servant (*kādim*), who carries out my business (*qāḍī ḥawāʾijī*), for I shall be cut off from him, if there is a delay. (7r:3–9)

The bearer of this (letter) is my loyal and respectful companion, Oua, who is my servant (*kādimī*). I have sent him with my slave boy (*ḡulāmī*) Mārīkura. (6r:3–4)

Letter 4 refers to the *kādim* of the eparch:

I wrote to you concerning the condition of my slaves (*ʿabīdī*; i.e., my subordinate staff) but you did not reply. Then I wrote to you concerning the condition of the two slaves (*al-raʾsayn al-raqīq*) who are to be sent to my creditor ʿAbū al-Ḍubāʿ, but you have not sent them to me and I do not know whether your servant (*kādimuka*) has given us a share. (4r, margin, 3–v:1)

Letter 14 refers to the *kadama* ‘servants’ of the eparch together with his *ʿabīd*:

He has a right to your customary protection, so that he is able to have access to the administrators (*al-wulāh*) and others of your slaves and servants (*ʿabīdihā wa-kadamatihā*). (14r:5–6)

In medieval Arabic sources, the term *kādim* is often used to designate eunuchs, either those enslaved or those that have been freed (Ayalon 1985). This may be the basis of the distinction between *kaḍama* and *ʿabīd*, i.e., eunuch and non-eunuch servants respectively.

The writer of letter 30 reports that he has pursued two of his servants (*kādimayn*) who had run away from Aswan to Nubia, heading for Soba. This may reflect their status as slaves that the writer regarded as being his property. It also suggests that they were Nubians, and so acquired as items of exchange:

I have sent in advance a first letter to the Master of the Horses, the vizier of the king, with Ṭāʿī concerning two servants (*kādimayn*) who fled from me there to Ibrīm, (where you are) during your trip, heading for Soba in the middle of Nubia. I did my utmost to pursue them until I crossed the waters of Kurkur. (30r:5–7)

When the name of a *kādim* is mentioned, this is always an *ism* without any indication of genealogy, which is the normal naming practice of slaves in medieval Arabic letters:

Oua (6r:4)

Papa (7r:8)

The term *kādim* is also used, however, to refer to a person who is loyal to the king and so, metaphorically, in his service:

I have been wronged, although I am the servant of the king (*kādim al-malik*). (9v:5)

As for what you have said with regard to the service (*kidmat*) of the king, we are all his servants (*kuddāmuhu*). (22r:4–5)

I am his (i.e., the king's) slave (*mamlūkuhu*) and servant (*kādimuhu*). (13r:9)

### 10.7. *Mamlūk*

The term *mamlūk* (pl. *mamālīk*) 'slave' (literally 'possessed as property') is, in most cases, used metaphorically as a term of politeness to express obedience and allegiance to the eparch or king:

In several letters, the term is used to refer to Muslims who become subjects of the Nubian king:

I sent them (my sons) to be at the disposition of the king and (stay) in his land until God permits. I shall convey to them cloth for them to send to the king, may God preserve his life, and so that they can see his crown (i.e., have an audience with him) and become his slaves (*mamālīkihi*). (21r:6–8)

As for what you have said with regard to the service (*kidmat*) of the king, we are all his servants (*kuddāmuhu*) and slaves of the crown (*mamālīk al-tāj*; i.e., his subjects). (22r:4–5)

I am his (i.e., the king's) slave (*mamlūkuhu*) and servant (*kādimuhu*). (13r:9)

In letter 23, which is addressed to an eparch, the writer, the Master of the Shipmasts, refers to himself as a *mamlūk* in the opening formula and in the address:

The slave (*al-mamlūk*) kisses the ground and what he wishes him to know is that... (23r:3–4)

His slave, the Master of Shipmasts (23v, address, left)

Likewise, the writers of letter 24 refer to themselves throughout as *mamālīkuhā* 'your slaves' (the 3sg.f pronominal

suffix refers to the term *al-ḥaḍra* ‘honourable presence’, which is used to denote the eparch).

In one passage in letter **24**, the term *mamālik* seems to be referring to functionaries of the eparch:

Please arrange for your command to be issued to some of your slaves (*mamālikihā*) to extract forcibly from him what is appropriate, God willing. (24v:9–7)

Likewise, letter **31** refers to a *mamlūk* who appears to be acting as a functionary in the service of the merchant writer:

Do not leave them. Take their price. By God, convey (to me) half by means of the small slave (*al-mamlūk al-ṣaġīr*)...  
[ ] quickly, quickly, quickly! (31v:8–9)

### 10.8. *Mawlā*

A number of documents in the corpus refer to men termed *mawlā* ‘freedman’.

The following passage in **31** suggests that a *mawlā* was used as a family servant:

As for the freedman (*al-mawlā*), we brought him for the sake of the young girl (*bi-rasm al-ṣaġīra*). Do not leave him, but bring him with you. (31v:4–6)

In **35**, the writer sends greetings to a *mawlā*, indicating he is treated as part of the family:

Best wishes to you and to our brother Ḥusayn greetings and to our brother the freedman (*mawlā*) greetings. (35r:10)

In the legal document **46**, a freedman acts as a witness:

Mubārak, the freedman of the most powerful commander, Saʿd al-Dawla, witnessed... (46v, witness, 6)

In the legal document 47, a *mawlā* is a creditor:

ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Ḥasan, the trader, acknowledged... that he owes, has in his possession, is in debt to Merki ibn Abrām, the freedman of the rightly-guided, prosperous, just judge, Trust of the Kingdom, ʿAbū al-Ḳayr ʿIbrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Zubayr.... (47r:2–4)

In the document on the verso of 47, another *mawlā* pays the debt to the creditor:

Merki ibn Abrām, the freedman of the rightly-guided, prosperous, just judge, Light of the Kingdom, ʿAbū al-Ḳayr ʿIbrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Zubayr, while he was in health, while his acts were legal, and he acted willingly, asked me to tesify that he has received in full from ʿAbd Allāh, a freedman (*mawlā*), substituting for his father. (47v:7–8)

### 10.9. *Rasūl*

Men referred to by the term *rasūl* (pl. *rusul*) ‘messenger’ were sent on various errands, conveying merchandise and letters and buying goods. These activities of a *rasūl* appear to overlap largely with those of a *ḡulām* ‘slave boy’. The difference between the *rasūl* and the *ḡulām*, presumably, was that the former was free whereas the latter was a slave:

I was intending to send a messenger (*rasūl*) to the king with the merchandise that I have bought for him for ten dīnārs and the horse that I have prepared for him, and equipment that he requested from me, but my slave boy (*ḡulāmī*)



arrived, humiliated and wronged by Ibn al-‘Asqalānī. I sent the messenger (*al-rasūl*), after I had informed the bishop about my suffering due to his (Ibn ‘Asqalānī’s) shocking behaviour. I said to him that a messenger (*rasūl*) would reach you. (9v:7–12)

So, I sent your slave boy (*ḡulāmaka*) together with my messenger (*rasūlī*) to the market and he bought... (9r:14)

The commander is expecting in great anticipation news to reach him from your honour. Ensure that your letters reach the commander. Your messengers (*rusuluhā*) are in contact with him all the time. (16r:16–margin, 2)

Your two companions have seen my messenger (*rasūlī*) whom I sent in connection with the slave (*al-waṣīfa*). (17r:9–10)

I [request that you arrange for] the dispatch of a messenger (*rasūl*) to it (Aswan?) afterwards. Please ensure that he proceeds safely to his colleagues, and take care of this colleague of mine and protect him, and also his colleagues in the armed garrison post, in order that his letter may reach me, thankfully, here (Aswan). (19r:4–6)

If my messenger (*rasūlī*) delays sending what should be sent, do not omit to send me a letter containing the mention of your news. (32:9–10)

The writers of letter 24 report that a *rasūl* who was accompanying a sick slave became ill himself:

They (the writers) inform him that the slave (*al-ra’s al-raḡīq*) whom he bestowed upon his slaves (*mamālīkihā*, i.e., the writers of this letter) through the agency of Bazili was sick, and that his slaves (*mamālīkihā*, i.e., the writers) wanted to return her, but the messenger (*al-rasūl*) whom she accompanied became ill. (24r:6–9)

The writer of letter **25** asks the eparch not to delay returning the writer's messenger:

If you would (kindly) send my messenger (*rasūli*) to them from your place, then please do so, for time has run out for me. (25r:15)

The term *rasūl* is used in letter **21** to refer to an envoy from the Fatimid ruler:

My grandfather travelled to visit the just king Basil and my father travelled to visit the king Mūyis the father of Mena Kurē (?), as a messenger (*rasūl*) from the ruler, may God strengthen his victory, to Soba. (21r:9–11)

### 10.10. *Mutaḥammil*

The term *mutaḥammil* 'carrier, bearer' is frequently used in the correspondence of the corpus to refer to the bearer of the letter who delivers it to the addressee:

When the bearer of this letter (*mutaḥammil hādā al-kitāb*) reaches you, release him and send him away quickly. (2r:6–7)

I have sent with the bearer of this letter (*mutaḥammil hādā al-kitāb*) also two beds of Iraqi workmanship. (2v:1)

The bearer of these lines (*mutaḥammil hādīhi al-suṭūr*) is the Head, may God decree his safety, and he must be shown favour and respect. (26r:4–5)

A common phrase in the letters is *mutaḥammiluhā*. The 3sg.f suffix most likely has an inanimate plural sense. It may be referring to the lines (*suṭūr*) of the letter; cf. *mutaḥammil hādīhi al-suṭūr* (26r:4). Alternatively it may be referring to the letter and

associated items, e.g., enclosed accounts, goods, or possibly also other letters delivered in the same batch.

The bearer of this letter (*mutaḥammiluhā*) is my loyal and respectful companion, Oua, who is my servant. (6r:3–4)

The bearer of this letter (*mutaḥammiluhā*), who has travelled (to you), is the leader Ḥasan, the son of the leader Šujā‘ al-Dawla (‘the Courage of the State’) ʾIshāq, the administrator of the gate. (8r:3–4)

(I report) the arrival of the bearer of this letter (*mutaḥammiluhā*) to the land of the Nubians, together with a horse in order to seek his livelihood by selling it. (14r:3–4)

So, we have sent the carrier of this letter (*mutaḥammiluhā*) Bazilī. (24v:4)

I have sent with the bearer of the letter (*mutaḥammiluhā*) a dyed garment in place of the payment in cash. (36v:2–3)

The bearer of this letter (*mutaḥammiluhā*), the leader Sa‘āda, may God decree his abundant good health, the relative of the noble leader, Humām al-Dawla (‘Hero of the Dynasty’) Ḥāmid, may God decree for him abundant good health, has departed. (3r, margin, 1–3)

The second occurrence of *mutaḥammil* in the following passage from letter 2 refers to the carrier of goods:

I have sent with the bearer of this letter (*mutaḥammil hāḏā al-kitāb*) also two beds of Iraqi workmanship. Please accept what he has sent you and send on the carrier of them (i.e., the goods; *mutaḥammilahum*) as quickly as possible, if God wills. (2v:1–3)

In the two passages from 24 below, the 3sg.f suffix of *mutaḥammil* refers to the eparch, the feminine agreement being with the honorific term *ḥaḏra* ‘honourable presence’. The intention

may be the carrier of the letter or the carrier of the goods, as in 2v:3:

...for your carrier (*mutaḥammiluhā*) has absconded.  
(24v:5)

Your carrier (*mutaḥammiluhā*) has arrived, grateful for your kindness and the good that you have done. (24v, margin, 1–2)