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# Reading and Analytical Study of Three Papyri on the City of Damietta in the Period from (1<sup>st</sup> AH-6<sup>th</sup> AD) Century to the (3<sup>rd</sup> AH-9<sup>th</sup> AD) Century

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# **Keywords**

# Papyrus \_1 Damietta, El-Baz \_2 El-Nawatieh \_3 Thughour \_4

#### **Abstract**

This research deals with a reading and analysis of three papyri from the first to the third century AH, which document some of the aspects of Islamic civilization in the city of Damietta in that time from the commercial, economic, and social and political aspects. The research shows the importance of the city of Damietta as one of the most important coastal cities, this importance is due to its featured geographical location on the Mediterranean coast, this location made it an important commercial center for internal and external trade, The research also deals with the importance of Arab papyri in documenting the various aspects of Islamic civilization, papyrus was means of intellectual life in Egypt and its ancient culture for forty centuries, and it was material for Islamic culture for at least three centuries. Since the Muslim Arabs entered Egypt and settled there, they found that paper in Egypt was made from the papyrus plant, so they sponsored this industry well, and the Muslims brought papyrus factories under their control since the era of Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab, and they continued as well throughout the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs and also in the Umayyad and Abbasid eras . Therefore, one of the goals of the research selection was to clarify the role and importance of Arab papyri in documenting an important part of the social, economic, and commercial and political aspects of Islamic civilization, information about which is known from the study of the content of those papyri.

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# 1. Introduction

Damietta city is considered one of the most important commercial and industrial cities. where it plays an important role in internal and external trade, as it is one of the Islamic Thaghr (a coastal city on Mediterranean Sea coast). On the other hand, it is also an important industrial center because it is famous for its multiple industries, including the manufacture of linen, clothes, and industries other textiles, which is no less important than textiles, for which the city of Tinnis was famous. and it was also an important shipbuilding center in Islamic Egypt and continued to practice this industry during the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk eras and it became famous for this industry because the coming out of the fleets to invade was mainly using its coasts. The evidence of its importance is also what is mentioned in the Arabic papyrus documents, which serve as a documentation of the aspects of Islamic civilization in Damietta during Islamic times, whether economic, commercial, or social manifestations. The Arabic papyri show us some of the aspects of Islamic civilization since the Arab conquest of Egypt.

# 2. The importance of the study

- To shed light on an importance of the city of Damietta from a commercial, social, and political point of view.
- The featured geographical location of the city of Damietta on Mediterranean Sea.
- The importance of Arabic papyri in documenting the aspects of Islamic civilization.

# 3. Methodology

• The researcher relied on the descriptive and analytical research method, which includes the description and analysis of the papyri mentioned in the research.

# **❖** First: Geographically, Damietta location

The city of Damietta is (thagher) one of the coastal entrances to ancient Egypt, located on the eastern branch of the Nile known as the Damietta branch<sup>1</sup>. It is like an island with an area of five hundred acres, surrounded by the waters of the Mediterranean Sea from the north, the water of Lake Manzala from the east, and the Nile flowing widely to its west. To the south, there are farms and the plains of the Delta<sup>2</sup> Damietta is in the fourth region<sup>3</sup>. It is a prominent city on the coast of the Levantine Sea<sup>4</sup>, from the

أ مجد رمزي، القاموس الجغرافي للبلاد المصرية من عهد قدماء المصريين إلى سنة 1945، القسم الثاني، الجزء الأول، مطبعة دار الكتب المصرية، القاهرة، 1955-1945، ص8.

<sup>2</sup> نقولا يوسف، تاريخ دمياط منذ أقدم العصور، ص 41.

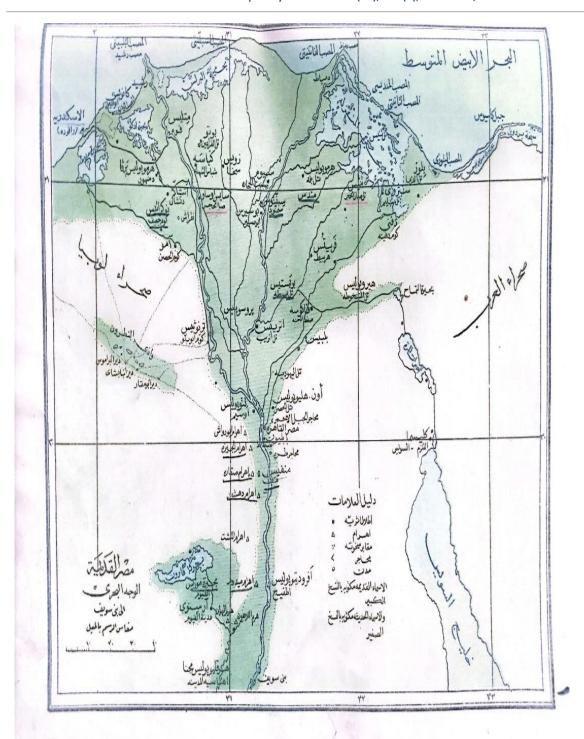
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The fourth region: sixty-three degrees away from the equator and along the Great Western Sea from the country of Tangier, taking the North Sea in the east to the North Country and then Persia, The famous cities in it: Tahert, Kairouan, African countries, Tripoli, Alexandria, Damietta, Ashkelon, Damascus, Ahvaz, Kufa, Basra, Baghdad, Shiraz, people with acumen, intelligence, science, and literature.

الشيخ إسحاق بن أبي الحسين الزيات (من أهل القرن الرابع الهجري)، ذكر الأقاليم واختلافها وأحوالها وأبعادها عن خط الاستواء والمدن المشهورة فيها وتذريع الأرض وقدر المعمور منها واختلاف الأزمان فيها واختلاف جهة ميل الشمس عن سمت كل إقليم، وحركتها في البروج الاثني عشر، تحقيق ودراسة د. عمرو عبد العزيز منير، تقديم الدراسات والنشر والشؤون الخارجية، مركز جمعة الماجة للثقافة والتراث، 1440هـ/2019م، ص 58.

southern direction. The Nile River passes through the Abyssinian country, Sudan, and then on Nubia and its great city of Damqala, then on Aswan, and then it flows to the homes of Egypt<sup>5</sup>, it may carry to it from the Abyssinian country its rains increase and drifts from its soil, it needs them both because its rain is not enough to plant and trees. And its soil is sand that does not sprout anything until the Nile comes with its increase and mud, and what they need will grow in it, and bring forth thereby crops from which their livestock eat. Then the Nile passes through Egypt a little and splits into two branches near a village on its shore called Shatnuf. The western branch passes by Rashid and flows into the Mediterranean Sea. As for the eastern branch, it also splits at Jujur into two branches. The western one passes by Damietta from its west and flows into the sea, while the eastern one passes by Ashmun-Tanah and flows there into the eastern Damietta Lake, also known as Lake Tanies and Lake Damietta. This is considered great from its beginning to its end.

<sup>4</sup>الشيخ إسحاق بن أبي الحسين الزيات، ذكر الأقاليم واختلافها وأحوالها وأبعادها عن خط الاستواء والمدن المشهورة فيها وتذريع الأرض وقدر المعمور منها واختلاف الأزمان فيها واختلاف جهة ميل الشمس عن سمت كل إقليم، وحركتها في البروج الاثني عشر، من 181

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>أبو الفداء إسماعيل بن عمر بن كثير القرشي البصري، المحقق على شيري، الجزء الأول، ص 27، 1408هـ - 1988م، الطبعة الأولى، دار إحياء التراث العربي.



(Figure 1) A map shows that Damietta is one of Northern cities

(محد رفعت ولطيف وهبه، الأطلس التاريخي وبه خمس وسبعون خريطة ورسما بالألوان لإيضاح أهم المواطن التاريخية

والتغيرات الإقليمية في العصور القديمة والمتوسطة والحديثة، مطبعة المعارف ومكتبة مصر، 1926م.)

# **❖** Second: A Brief History of Damietta

It means the city of the god Ptah the Dragon and it is a correction of the hieroglyphic name of the city of Damietta Dmat n ptahTnen. Most likely, it is the Egyptian name of the village that is known today as Damat, one of the villages of the Tanta Center in the Western Directorate of Dmat<sup>6</sup>, and it was mentioned in the AL-Mushtaq picnic in the first of which is the letter Zal (Zmeat), a city on the Bank of the river and works with precious clothes<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, Damietta is considered a significant link between the interior of the country and the outside world in terms of its ease of connection within the country and taking it as a springboard for ships sailing towards neighboring countries. Damietta is considered a port that connects to the rest of Egypt's northern ports in the East and West and connected through Lake Tinnis to the city of Tinnis and Farma. Also, these sea connections, there is the northern coastal road of the delta that connects Damietta to the rest of the coastal city.

# Damietta is an important industrial and commercial center

The city of Damietta has been famed since its early history for its industrial and commercial distinction. It has long been a successful industrial city and an important trade gateway helped by its distinguished geographical location. Damietta is a main industrial center and was an important center of industry in Egypt during the Islamic era. It known for different industries such as the textile industry, dyeing, Shipbuilding and other industries that depend on agricultural production such as sugar industry and confectionery industry.

Textile industry: because of its proximity to flax growing areas, Damietta excelled especially in making linen textiles, in addition to woolen and silk fabrics, woven them the same species that were into Tinnis as shroup and linen style and used to produce the Dubaiki clothes, named after the city of Dubaik, and white Reed dresses. Damietta is known for its textile industry, quality fabrics, and linen<sup>9</sup>.

Ibn Haqel stated that Tinnis and Damietta are islands between salty and fresh water in which it takes and works high linen, clothing, and dyes that in all the earth are not equal in value, grace, luxury, delicacy, and precision<sup>10</sup>. The produced dress was probably worth two hundred dinars if it had gold and a hundred dinars if it did not have gold, and all that worked with made in linen. Its people were rich, with no work but making high-quality clothes that no other countries make like them.

because of the spectrum of its weather, its abundance of water and its moderation of mood, and because the sea surrounds it from the North, and the Nile bays separate

 $<sup>^{6}</sup>$  مجد رمزي، القاموس الجغرافي، القسم الأول للبلاد المندرسة، مطبعة دار الكتب المصرية، القاهرة، 1953-1954م، صـ250.  $^{7}$  الإدريسي، نزهة المشتاق في اختراق الأفاق، المجلد الأول، 1422هـ/ 2002م، صـ330.

ابن حوقل، صورة الأرض، دار مكتبة الحياة للطباعة والنشر

<sup>8</sup> عاصم محد رزق، مراكز الصناعة في مصر الإسلامية من الفتح العربي حتى مجيء الحملة الفرنسية، الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب، 1989، ---136

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>هويدا عبد العظيم رمضان، المجتمع في مصر الإسلامية من الفتح العربي إلى العصر الفاطمي، الجزء الأول، ص 167، الهيئة المصرية العامة لكتاب، 1994م.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>ابن حوقل، نفس المرجع ، ص 143.

on it in every place, and from there they ride with their belongings to the countries of Rome foreign countries, coastal countries, and others. It is close to the island of Cyprus and the island of Rhodes in the sea, where they carry flour and fruits to the port of Damietta and Tinnis (which is close to Damietta on the sea and is on the same line<sup>11</sup>).

# **\*** The papyrus in which Damietta was mentioned.

• First papyrus: plate (1 - 2)

Size of the papyri:  $14 \text{ cm} \times 17.2 \text{ cm}$ .

Material written on it: Dark brown papyrus.

Content written on it: Written in black ink, with a medium thickness pen.

Number of lines: Eight lines.

Condition of the papyri: (The right side is missing with significant loss of text).

Date of the papyri: 2nd century AH / 8 AD.

Number of save: P.CtYBR.inv. 2710

#### o Recto:

```
1 [بسم الله الرحم] ن [ا]لرحيم
2 [من عثمن بن ملد الى] /ابان/ ام حجر ابنت شريح وام عباس وحفصة و عيشة /و عدية/ بنت اس[معيل]
3 [واهلنا] كلهم سلم عليكم فانا نحمد اليكم الله الذي لا إله الا [هو]
4 [اما بعد فانا نخبر] كم من خبرنا انا سالمين صلحين كالذي يسركم لم
5 [يحدث علي] نا بعدكم والحمد لله الا خيرا وانا ما دون ما لكم
6 [واخبركم] ان ابى قد حلف لا يكتب اليكم حتا يخرج من دمياط
7 منى ولا .....رايها حتى [ا] والسلم عليكم ور .[]
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o Verso

من عثمن بن ملد (vac.) الى ابان بن عثمن

#### Translation

- 1. [In the name of God the Compassiona]te, [t]he Merciful.
- 2. [From 'Uthmān b. Malad] to \Abān/ Umm Ḥajar bt. Shurayḥ and Umm 'Abbās and Hafsa

\and 'Adiyya/ and 'A'isha bt. Is[ma'il]

- 3. [ and all our family.] Peace be upon you. We praise for your sake God, other than Whom there is no [god.]
- 4. [As for what follows, we want to let you kn]ow our news, namely that we are well and

in good health, which will please you. Nothing

5. [happened to u] s after you, God be praised, except for good things. We did not .... of

what belongs to you

- 6. [And I inform you] that my father swore not to write to you till he leaves Dimyāt
- 7. []. from me and do not ....... [] Peace be upon you and
- 8. [God's mercy] and blessings. And [] that [] Yaḥyā

#### o Text Analysis

A private letter from a person named Othman bin Meld, sent to several names, all of whom are women. They are Eban, Umm Hajr (daughter of shrayh), Umm Abbas,

<sup>. 128</sup> الشيخ إسحاق ابن الحسن أبن أبي الحسين الزيات، مرجع سابق، ص 128.  $^{11}$ 

Hafsa, Aisha, and Adiyya(daughter of Ismail) ,Which may be had a family relationship between them. Most of the letter consists of greetings and reassurance, indicating strong family relationships and the extent of family cohesion. Therefore, they exchange letters to inquire about each other's well-being. In the letter, he informs them that his father swore not to write them a letter until he leaves Damietta. It seems from his words that he is currently present with his father in Damietta and sends them reassurance about him and his well-being. Perhaps the reason for their presence in Damietta, him, and his father, is for a short time, perhaps for trade or the purchase of some goods. This indicates that Damietta was a meeting place for many people for trade, purchase, and other reasons.

Plate 13

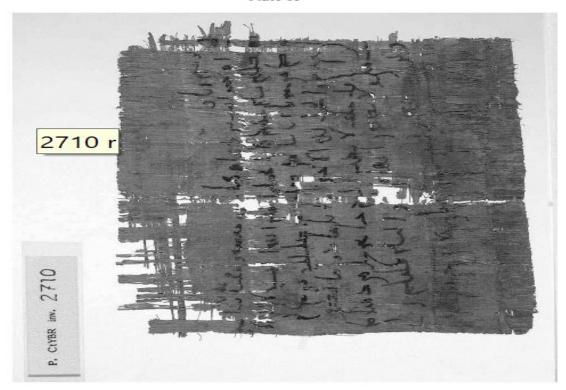


Plate 14



P.CtYBR.inv. 2710 v

Plate (1-2) private letter it mentioned that the father does not write until after he left Damietta (2<sup>nd</sup> AH/8AD) century (Younes, Khaled Mohamed Mahmoud, Joy, and sorrow in early Muslim Egypt: Arabic papyrus letters, text, and content, 2013-08-27, p121)

#### • The second papyrus: plate (3 - 4)

Size of the papyri:  $14.1 \text{ CM} \times 9.5 / 14.7 \times 13.2$ 

The papyrus is written in Arabic - written on brown papyrus. The number of lines of the papyrus: (11) is one line on the recto – and one line on the verso.

Date of the papyri: 2nd century AH / 8m Number of save: P.CtYBR.inv. 2705

#### o Recto:

1 بسم الله الرحمن الرحي[م]
2 للمسور بن رجا من الخير بن مس [لم سلم عليك] فانى احمد اليك الله الذى
3 لا اله الا هو .3 (vac.)
4 اما بعد عافنا ال [له واياك باحسن] عاف[يت]ه في الدنيا والاخرة
5 وجعل مصيرنا و[اياك الجنة برحمت] ه كتبت اليك حي[ن] قدمت
6 دمياط وانا سا [لم صالح والله مح] مود [ق]د [ا] حسن الله لذا الصحابة
7 وله الحمد وكان [] واكتب الينا ابا رجا بخبرك
8 وسلامتك وب [حالك وحوايجك] اخ[ب]رك انى قدمت دمياط
9 فوجدت البز فشر [يته] اف[ا]نسل [ال]له ان يوفق لنا حاجتنا
10 وان يبارك لنا ف [يها ان شا الله و] السلم عليك ورحم إكت الله

#### Verso:

للمسور بن رجا الونبي من (.vac) [الخير بن مس] لم الونبي

#### o Translation:

#### Recto

- 1. of God. the Compassionate, Merci[ful.] the name the 2. To al-Miswar b. Rajā' from al-Khayr b. Mus[lim. Peace be upon you.] I praise for sake God. other than vour Whom, 3. there is god. (vac.)
- 4. As for what follows, may God grant [us and you the best] of health in this world and the hereafter
- 5. and may He make [paradise your] and our destiny through His [merc]y. I wrote to you, when I arrived at
- 6. Dimyāṭ, whereas I am [well and in good health, God be prai]sed. God has given us agood company,
- 7. praise be to Him. It was [] and write to me, Abū Rajā', about your news a 8. your sound condition and [your state and your needs.] I would like to let you know that I arrived at Dimyāṭ
- 9. and that I found the linen and I bou[ght it ]. I ask God to grant us success in our needs.
- 10. and to bless us in [it, If God wills.] Peace be upon you and God's mercy.
- 11. Send from me to all [our partners greetings] and to your family and your children from me greetings.

#### Verso:

To al- Miswar b. Rajā' al-Wanbī from (vac.) [al-Khayr b. Mus] lim al-Wanbī

#### Text Analysis:

It's a private letter, perhaps from a friend to his friend, started with the (basmallah) (In the name of Allah, The All-Merciful, The Ever-Merciful), and then the addressee (Massor Bin Raja) and sender (Al-Khair Bin Muslim), then pray formula for him and thank Allah, the expression(Amma ba'ad) it means (after that) in most correspondence, it considered to be a transitional expression between the beginning of the letter, which stared with- (Hamad and Salam) praise be to Allah that everything is ok and sending greetings; and the content of the letter, which contains the basic subject, and then prays words from the sender to the addressee; pray for him in wellness in life and the next life to go to heaven.

(I wrote to you) a phrase comes after the reason for sending the letter, he tells his friend that he arrived at Damietta, and he is fine and well-being, he sent him this letter and asks him to send a replay to him with news and wish him to be in great. He also tells him that he arrived Damietta and found the (baz) and bought it. El-Baz<sup>12</sup> is clothes made in linen or cotton. It's worth mentioning that craft of (Al-Bazazaza) is one of the famous skilled craft was mentioned in the Arab papyrus, it means the trade and selling of clothes.

This craft is occupied by many Muslims, as well as by the (DHIMMIS) (Non-Muslim communities under Muslim rule and protection) some of them have been named in the Arabic papyrus<sup>13</sup>. It is worth mentioning that the craft of bazaz had a private market in Egypt, the traveler Nasser Khosro<sup>14</sup> praised the accuracy of the Egyptian fabric sold by the traders of baz(linen); in which explains why the sender is keen to buy the baz (linen)from Damietta because of its quality and the good reputation of Damietta.

Here we can talk about Damietta a commercial city and famous for some goods, including linen and textile industry as well.

His friend seems to have asked him to buy El Baz from Damietta and they may also be partners in the trade, Al-Khair bin Muslim went to Damietta to buy some commodities needed for trade, and he prayed to God to bless them in their need and trade, and to send him peace to all their companions (this indicates that they are friends and they have mutual friends, and this is another type of social relations, which is the relationship of friendship) and peace to his family and children (this also indicates The strength of the friendship between them and his knowledge of his family and children) and at the end the name of the messenger (Al-Khair bin Muslim) to the addressee (Al-Miswar bin Raja Al-Wannabi). The script is characterized by some early features, i.e.  $t\bar{a}$  has a downward shaft at the left (ll. 6, 8 Dimyāt). The teeth of  $s\bar{\imath}n$  are reduced to a slight ripple in the stroke (l. 1 bi-sm; l. 8  $sal\bar{a}matika$ ). Final  $y\bar{a}$  bends occasionally backwards (l. 2  $alladh\bar{\imath}$ ).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> هويدا عبد العظيم رمضان، المجتمع في مصر الإسلامية من الفتح العربي إلى العصر الفاطمي، ج 1، ص 125، 1994م، الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب.

<sup>13</sup> سعيد مغاوري محمد، الألقاب وأسماء الحرف والوظائف في ضوء البرديات العربية، مجلد الأول، ص 228، 1421هـ - 2000م، مكتبة دار الكتب المصرية بالقاهرة.

<sup>14</sup> ناصر خسرو علوي، سفر نامه، ترجمة ديحي الخشاب ص 59-60، 1993م، الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب.

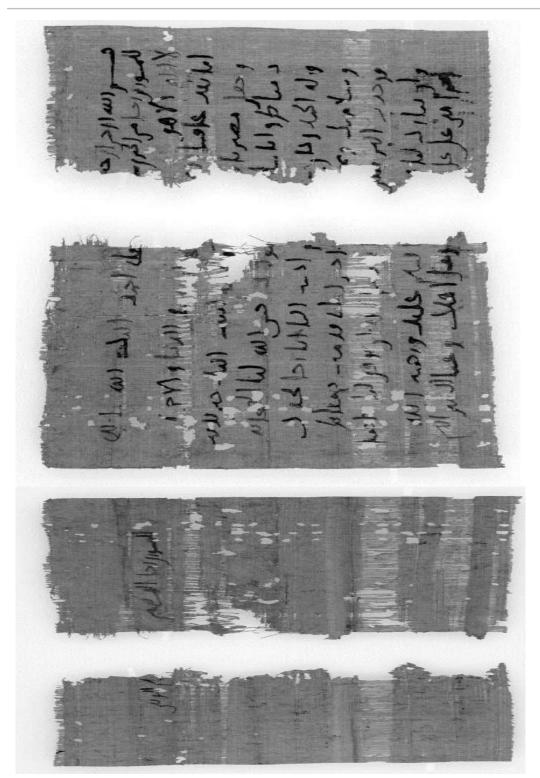


Plate (3-4) private letter between two friends and thy had business partnership they bought linen from Damietta (Younes, Khaled Mohamed Mahmoud, Joy, and sorrow in early Muslim Egypt: Arabic papyrus letters, text, and content, 2013-08-27, p121.)

#### • The Third papyrus: plate (5 - 6)

Size of the papyri:  $24 \times 10$  cm.

Material written on it: Brown papyrus.

Date of the papyri: 3h / 9M

It consists of 11 lines on the recto and 5 lines on the verso.

Papyrus condition: the right half of the papyrus is missing as well as the text.

Number of save: PPS 248

#### o TEXT:

أكرمك الله يا أخي وتم نعمته عليك و غمدك في الدنيا والأخرة برحمته كتابي إليك يا أخي من دمياط وأنا بحال عافيه يذكر الكاتب أيضا في رسالته الفسطاط والفيوم ويختتم بالترحيب، في الظهر 3 أسطر مكتوبه بالمقلوب.

#### o Translation:

I honor You, Brother, and he has blessed you and wrapped you in this world and the afterlife with his mercy.

My letter is written to you, brother, from Damietta, and I am in good health. In his letter, the writer also mentions Fustat and Fayum; it ended with a greeting, in the back 3 lines are written upside down.

# o Text analysis:

This is a letter, perhaps, from a friend to a friend, who started it with prays phrases of Health and mercy from Allah, and tells him that he is being sent to him from Damietta and reassures him that he is well -being; there are names of other cities, namely Fustat and Fayoum, may be the sender on a commercial trip and passed through that cities on his trip to buy some goods and then went to Damietta. This letter shows us that Damietta was an important commercial center where all merchants passed to buy various goods and its location is distinguished, it is on the Mediterranean coast.

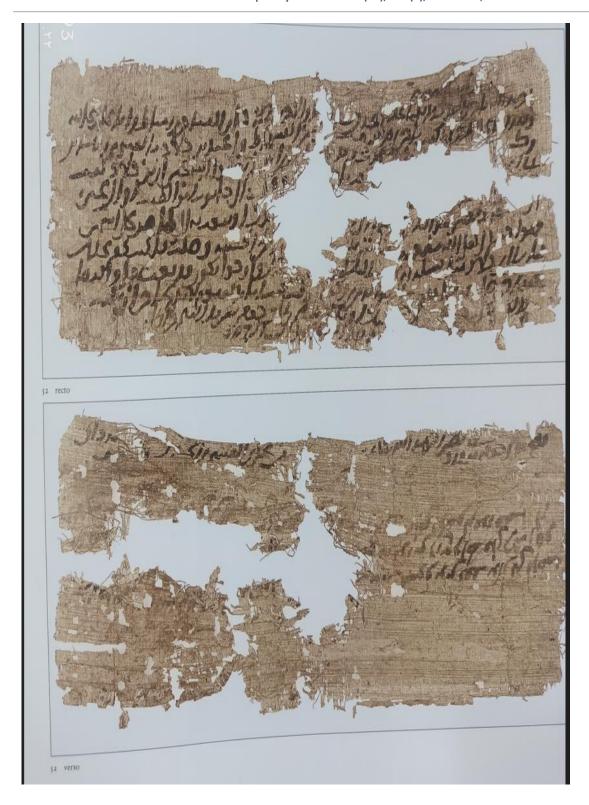


Plate (5-6) letter show that the sender on a commercial trip and passed through various cities such as fayoum and al- fustat on his trip to buy some goods and then went to Damietta (Geoffery khan, The Nasser d, Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, Volume VI, Bills letters and deed)

# 4. The most important results reached by the researcher were as follows

- The city of Damietta is one of the most important commercial and economic centers since the Arab conquest of Egypt, where all merchants come to buy their goods.
- The city of Damietta is considered one of the important Islamic frontiers, due to its distinguished geographical location on the Mediterranean Sea, which made it an impregnable fortress and an important strategic military site.
- The importance of Arabic papyri in documenting the various manifestations of Islamic civilization Knowledge of aspects of social, economic, and commercial life through the content of the papyri that have been studied, such as:
  - o Strong family relationships.
  - o Friendship relationship and its interdependence.
  - O The importance of the city of Damietta for merchants to buy their goods and the most famous industries in Damietta.

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