

# A Twentieth-Century Merchant Network Centered on Jeddah: The Correspondence of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Bin Ḥimd

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## ABSTRACT

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*This article examines a collection of merchant letters which arrived between 1919 and 1946 in the Red Sea port of Jeddah. Their recipient, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Bin Ḥimd, was a merchant of Hadhrami origin, deeply embedded in the trade with grain, foodstuffs and other goods in the Red Sea area. Based on a survey of some of the documents, the article describes the merchant's network as well as the content of some sample letters to unlock their potential as an important source for the economic history of the region.*

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This article is based on a rare collection of twentieth-century merchant correspondence kept in the King Abdul Aziz Foundation for Research and Archives (Dārat al-Malik ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, henceforth Dāra) in Riyadh. It attempts to give a brief, initial description based on a cursory examination of the collection. That such a brief and incomplete inspection of what is a much fuller collection merits publication at all is linked to the fact that, until now, no similar collections of merchant documents from the

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nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been available to researchers working on the territories of present-day Saudi Arabia. Many such documents are probably held in private collections, and have at times been shared selectively with researchers. Still, to the best of my knowledge, nothing amounting to a seemingly full collection has been found or, rather, been accessible.<sup>1</sup> The Dāra has been buying family papers, among them merchant correspondence, but the archiving, sorting, and cataloguing of these collections only started recently, so it will take some time until the collections can be found in its catalogues and properly used.<sup>2</sup> Hence, the aim of this article is to introduce this particular collection, hint at what it might be able to tell us, and encourage other scholars to work on them once they become fully accessible.

This scarcity of sources is in contrast to the finds of Gagan Sood, centered around India in the eighteenth century, Francesca Trivellato, who discusses a Sephardic diaspora based in Livorno, and Sebouh Aslanian, who describes the Armenian merchant networks of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>3</sup> Beyond the documents of the Cairo Geniza, a small number of Middle Eastern merchant archives have been unearthed in recent decades. Li Guo has described in detail the commercial correspondence of a merchant from al-Qusayr in thirteenth-century southern Egypt. It served as a major port connecting Qus on the Nile with the Red Sea and Indian Ocean trade, although the documents contain frustratingly little detail on the correspondents on the Eastern shores of the Red Sea.<sup>4</sup> Nelly Hanna could base her work on the Egyptian merchant Isma'īl Abū Taqiyya on the very comprehensive Cairo court records, a source not readily available in many places.<sup>5</sup> Thus, Nancy Um, working on Mocha in the eighteenth century, relied mostly on trade documents of the Dutch East India Company as well as Arab chronicles and biographical dictionaries.<sup>6</sup> Mafalda Ade had the chance to work in the unique archive of the families Poche and Marcopoli, European merchants and consuls based in Aleppo in the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Much less is known about Arab merchants of the modern period, however.<sup>8</sup> One exception is the sample of early nineteenth-century merchant correspondence from Asyut described by Terence Walz.<sup>9</sup>

Given the importance of Hijāzī, as well as Najdī merchants in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, research about their activities, networks, and ways of conducting business would be an important addition to this emerging literature in economic history. In particular, the recipient

of the letters discussed here, Muḥammad Bin Ḥimd, belonged to the Hadhrami diaspora of the Ḥijāz, a group that was famous for its Indian Ocean trade and spreading of Islam. Until now, hardly any Hadhrami merchant correspondence has been available for further research, although a variety of other legal and archival documents have been used in recent studies.<sup>10</sup> A prime example is Philippe Pétriat's work on the Hadhrami merchants of Jeddah, centered on the house of Bā Najā, but mentioning many other merchants. His work does much to show how a family managed to establish itself in Jeddah, build alliances, and extend its familial and merchant network in the Red Sea region. Much of what he describes explains the type of network described below.<sup>11</sup> Although the merchants described by Pétriat were oriented towards Cairo, it is striking that at least the sample investigated does not include this major hub, and seems overall more directed towards the southern part of the Red Sea. What distinguishes the collection described here is that it shows the correspondence of one particular merchant, and the different types of transactions, although it allows us less insight (so far) into the family connections that Pétriat describes with reference to a range of different merchant families.

Before engaging with the description and contents, though, a few words need to be said about the way in which I found the documents, because this reveals much about the problematic state of historical documentation and archiving, and hence also the limits of historical research in the Arabian Peninsula. This will be followed by biographical information on the addressee of the letters, and a discussion of their contents.

## **Documents, Archives, and Archivists**

It is indicative of the early stages of documentation that I was directed to the correspondence received by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Bin Ḥimd by a collector and antique merchant in Jeddah in March 2015. He informed me that he had sold merchant letters to the Dāra. In spite of the documents not being catalogued, my request to consult them there was eventually approved and I was given two tightly packed boxes of papers. The following description is based on the contents of the two boxes, which were examined in March 2015. It is by now clear that I only saw a fraction of the total merchant correspondence. Although it can no longer be reconstructed

how many tightly packed cartons there once were, the newly cleaned and packaged collection at the Dāra comprises about ninety (loosely filled) boxes.<sup>12</sup> In addition, an encounter with the grandson of the Shaykh revealed that the family still holds original correspondence.<sup>13</sup>

The two boxes contained tightly packed papers that were received by Shaykh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Bin Ḥimd, and cover the years from 1919 to 1946. As they shed light on one particular merchant network in the Red Sea centering on Jeddah, and potentially promise further insight into mercantile practices in the region at that time, the following will be as close a description as was possible given the time available. The analysis of a number of letters provided by the grandson of Muḥammad Bin Ḥimd (who holds the same name) could not be included in this article because the material is handwritten and of varying quality in terms of legibility and the state of preservation. The following investigation is therefore the first attempt to establish what kind of documents are contained in the archive, and an introduction to the contents of a small sample.<sup>14</sup> It is hoped that this will encourage others to continue this preliminary exploration and make a fuller evaluation of this precious material. It is already clear that the network described below does not include all of his correspondents even for the period under investigation, and that there are other types of documents pertaining to the same period, although the materials in the two boxes gave the impression of being chronologically ordered. It would require a close comparison of the holdings of the family with those of the Dāra to establish whether they are complementary or whether they were split according to a specific rationale.

Because the description of many of the documents is oriented towards describing how trade was conducted, it will be preceded by some information on the family in order to provide the historical context within which the trade by Shaykh Muḥammad Bin Ḥimd was conducted.

### **The Bin Ḥimd Family: A Hadhrami Trajectory**

A recently published local history of Jeddah lists the “House of Bin Ḥimd, the owner of which is Shaykh Muḥammad b. Ḥimd” among the rich importers of foreign goods in this important Red Sea port.<sup>15</sup> A friend who I consulted about the family kindly contacted them and then forwarded to

me a family history compiled by the descendants. Because the family is not mentioned in Hadhrami biographical dictionaries, this history remains the sole source for the family history recounted below.<sup>16</sup> It is also striking that, although the goods traded by the merchants described by Pétriat and Bin Ḥimd at least partially overlapped, these networks seem to have existed side by side rather than to have significantly overlapped. This might be because of the geographical foci of the merchants, but it could also be the arbitrary result of different sources used, given that Pétriat examined the Cairene archives but had only selective papers from the Bā Nājā, whereas I examined solely correspondence that arrived in Jeddah at a certain merchant's office. Of course, there could also be other reasons, tribal or merchant rivalry being obvious ones.

According to the family history, the “famous merchant house Bin Ḥimd in Jeddah” was founded by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Bin Ḥimd.<sup>17</sup> He is described as a descendent of the Āl Shamlān, a branch of the Ja‘da tribal group, and eventually the Qaḥṭān tribe who had settled in Wādī ‘Amd in Hadhramaut.<sup>18</sup> The emigration of one of Muḥammad's forefathers, a religious scholar, from Hadhramaut was linked to a religious dispute in the city of Tarīm about the use of drums during religious ceremonies. This had been introduced by the powerful al-Saqqāf family, who combined a prestigious Sayyid lineage with the economic success that resulted from their emigration to Southeast Asia.<sup>19</sup> The dispute, apparently one of many of its kind, caused a rift among members of the Shamlān tribal group.<sup>20</sup> It prompted the ‘ālim to migrate first to Java and then to Hyderabad, where many Hadhramis had found employment in the services of the Nizam. However, Bin Ḥimd was not so lucky and returned to the Peninsula, heading to Medina, where he died. This must have occurred in the 1770s or 1780s. A descendant, Aḥmad Bin Ḥimd, later moved to Jeddah and began to trade. His grandson, again by the name of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, is said to have been a grain merchant supplying the Ottoman troops, but also a dealer in arms and a specialist in their repair, thus serving the Ottoman troops in the Ḥijāz.<sup>21</sup> He sired the founder of the merchant house with which I will be dealing in this article, and other branches of the same family also were active in trade.

The founder of the merchant house was born in Jeddah around 1882, trained in a Quranic school and then with other merchants (as was the custom), before setting up his own business.<sup>22</sup> He had his office in the



Figure 1. The house of Bin Ḥimd in old Jeddah. (Photo by Ulrike Freitag.)

family house, situated in the Maḏlūm quarter of Jeddah, not far from the old harbor. This house, which actually is a combination of three houses around a lengthy courtyard, provided room for the office, living quarters for different family members, and accommodation for visiting merchants. It also offered ample space for the storage of Bin Ḥimd's goods, mostly grain, on the ground floor level.<sup>23</sup>

He was such a successful merchant that a number of aspiring traders were trained by him in later years. Bin Ḥimd traded with a number of countries and represented several international companies in Jeddah. He became a well-known mediator in merchant conflicts.<sup>24</sup> All of this contributed to his status of notability, which is confirmed by his participation in the ceremony during which the oath of loyalty when King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz was sworn in Mecca in 1926, and his candidacy for the Chamber of Commerce of the Ḥijāz four years later. In 1930, the king appointed him a member of this Chamber, which was supervising commercial dealings in the city.<sup>25</sup> In June 1931, he was elected member in the national conference in Mecca, together with members of other prominent families such as Bā ‘Ishn, Bā Nājā, and Naṣīf, and served in its committee of general affairs.<sup>26</sup> He supported the renaming of the country from “Kingdom of the Hijaz and the Sultanate of Najd” into the “Kingdom of Saudi Arabia” in 1932.<sup>27</sup> In addition to holding such ostensibly political offices, Bin Ḥimd also donated money to the al-Aqṣā Mosque in Jerusalem as well as to the Falāḥ School in Jeddah. He passed away in 1944/45 in Sudan, where he had gone for medical treatment. He is buried in Port Sudan. His son continued the family business, which increasingly operated as an agent for international firms, first and foremost for Singer sewing machines and Renault, and later Western kitchen and domestic furniture, in Jeddah.<sup>28</sup>

## The Documents . . . and Their Contents

The boxes I examined contained documents in identical order, i.e., filed by year and (overwhelmingly) type of document. The boxes inspected only included slips of paper and incoming letters, but no account books or copy books for outgoing correspondence. The account books are still being held in the family. What I was shown and told consisted of daily records by the different employees (*daftar yawmī li-l-ustādh*) as well as a consolidated daily register (*daftar āmm*) and books recording debts, credits, and assets such as properties.<sup>29</sup> This material suggests that the commercial techniques used in early twentieth-century Jeddah did not differ significantly from those described by Walz for nineteenth-century Asyut.<sup>30</sup> As they are not held at the Dāra; they do not form part of what is described in the following paragraphs.

What are the different types of documents? The first group in each box was an apparently annual collection of receipts of different shapes and forms that range from bits of paper torn out of notebooks and scribbled upon to fully stamped sheets. They attest to transfers of varying amounts of money by merchants residing in different cities. These were collected in an envelope. The receipts usually do not mention the purpose of the transfers or any of the background. It is likely that these payments, at least in part, attest to the balancing of accounts held by representatives (*wakīl*, pl. *wukalāʾ*) who provided credit, advanced payments, or had collected debts for Bin Ḥimd, although the system seems to have been less formal than in the case of the Aleppine merchants.<sup>31</sup>

The envelopes are followed by a collection of telegrams of different content. In part, they report money transfers, but they also inform Muḥammad b. Aḥmad about credits provided by the sender to other people, presumably on his behalf. Furthermore, they ask for advance payments or demand Bin Ḥimd pay others on behalf of the correspondent.

The next group of documents consists of lists of transactions and financial transfers sent by partners. Sometimes, there seem to have existed agreements on a fairly regular reporting system, and I found a “weekly report” (*taqrīr usbūʿī*) about sums transferred, sent by an unidentifiable correspondent on July 18, 1920. A certain Zāmil al-Ṣāliḥ Salīm in Jizān sent a half-year report. Yet other partners seem to have provided only annual accounts. Why there were these differences, and whether other documents supplemented the ones found, remains unclear.

There is a list of prices in Bombay sent by the al-Faḍl brothers that indicates that Bin Ḥimd was following market movements closely. This list contains prices primarily for foodstuffs, including rice, chickpeas, spices such as garlic and cardamom, coffee, and tea. However, it also includes a few other items such as particular types of cloth or matches. Likewise, the papers contain a report about the prices of tobacco leaves, and (in box 2) a letter from al-Luḥayya in Yemen discussing the prices of various goods. In a number of letters, business partners or agents write about purchases, usually of rice and sugar, or report the quantity of goods still in storage.

The second box also contained what seems to have been an urgent order of goods from a correspondent in Medina, sent on December 10, 1940 (10 *Dhū al-Qaʿida* 1359). In the same *hijrī* year, Bin Ḥimd was asked by the Finance Ministry of Saudi Arabia to pay Shaykh Ṣāliḥ Abū Zayn his



retirement allowance, thus presumably advancing money for the state. The practice of the rulers of the Ḥijāz, from Ottoman times well into the Saudi period, to ask local merchants for credit, is fairly well-documented.<sup>32</sup>

A well-known merchant was also approached in seemingly more obscure matters. On June 2, 1944 (9 *Jumāda al-ākhirā* 1363), a certain Sayyid ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Abdallāh Bā Faqīh in Asmara wrote to Muḥammad b. Aḥmad, reporting that the market was stagnant. He enquired whether this correspondent had any knowledge regarding the whereabouts of a certain Ḥāmid Bā Faqīh, who had written about a planned trip to Medina but apparently had not been in touch for a long time. We can presume that this was not merely a request for information about a relative with whom contact had been lost: Ade’s work on Aleppo shows convincingly that such enquiries were often prompted by the fear for the safety of credits and payments.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, Box 1 contains a little handwritten booklet with rules of Arabic grammar, perhaps used in training of apprentices when writing letters, or, less likely, as a reference for the Shaykh himself. This is not all that surprising: apprentices, usually called *ṣabī*, entered merchant households at a fairly early age, often between eight and ten. By that time, they would have had some basic Koranic schooling, but would not have been used to writing prose by themselves, notably of a type very different to what they had been exposed to.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Bin Himd is remembered to this day to have trained a number of young men who became leading merchants in their own right, among them ‘Abd al-Razzāq ‘Ajlān, Muḥammad Maghrabī and Muḥammad Bā Ma‘rūf al-‘Amūdī.<sup>35</sup>

The way of archiving—at least for the two boxes examined—did seem to follow a standard style: the receipts were placed first, followed by letters, price lists, and other documents (I could not discern more of an internal order, although this is a preliminary remark). The overall order was mostly chronological. Again, this confirms Sood’s observations, as far as can be judged from the limited amount of material consulted for this article.<sup>36</sup>

The more extensive letters to Bin Ḥimd seem to follow a certain pattern and are mostly written in dialect. The greeting and good wishes for health and family is usually followed by detailed reference to correspondence received (or queries about letters that were not acknowledged) and sent. Then, the writer usually confirms that all is well on his side, or he might mention the death of someone.<sup>37</sup> Although postal and courier services had

changed dramatically with the introduction of steamships and colonial rule, there were still major disruptions and insecurities, not least during World War II. Thus, the need for reassurance remained, similar to what Sood had registered.<sup>38</sup>

Only after this introduction is the actual topic of the letter approached. A particularly interesting letter written by ‘Abdallāh b. Ṣāliḥ Baṣa‘r in Hodeidah on October 9, 1943, i.e., at the height of World War II, contains a discussion of the grain market. Unfortunately, not all of the letter can be easily deciphered. “The grain prices,” Baṣa‘r writes, “are as we informed you earlier. Later [i.e., presumably after the last letter], the [Imam’s] government sold 13.000 *qadaḥ* for 52 Riyal per *qadaḥ*.”<sup>39</sup> Foodstuffs in the inland eat up all the expenses.” The government grain, he reports, was bought by merchants Bā Ghaffār, al-‘Aṭṭās, and Muḥammad ‘Alī Riḍā. Although the first two are families of Hadhrami origin, the latter originated from Persia. All of these families appear to have been among Bin Ḥimd’s partners, and they all had dependencies in Jeddah or Mecca. However, it seems that they did not obtain all the grain for which they had paid because the harvest was insufficient. The letter then gives prices of other goods, and announces the prospect of a good upcoming grain harvest, while alerting Bin Ḥimd to the fact that this did not guarantee the issuing of export permits for grain. Bā Ṣa‘r then writes about the coffee harvest, which was being bought up by European merchants, as well as by a representative of the merchant house Fikrī and others (of unknown origin), present at the time. He then gives the current price. Finally, Baṣa‘r asks about prices in Jeddah, particularly of Yemeni goods, before ending by offering his services and wishing Bin Ḥimd all the best.

This passage, and notably the section about the grain trade, raises additional questions. World War II in the region was accompanied by multiple famines: Djibouti in 1941–42, Eritrea in 1942–43, Aden and Hadhramaut in 1943, and Sudan in 1944–45.<sup>40</sup> In Yemen, the early 1940s were characterized by “prolonged drought, famine, and deadly epidemics.”<sup>41</sup> Another letter by Ṣāliḥ Baṣa‘r, possibly the father (or son) of the above writer, confirms this: he mentions in July 1943 rains that, should they continue, “will do good and stop the spread of excessive hunger.”<sup>42</sup> It is likely that the merchants mentioned as buying up government grain reserves, as well as possibly Bin Ḥimd, were involved in grain speculation in the Red Sea region. Be that as it may, they were crucial to providing



Figure 2. Storage facilities of Bin Ḥimd. (Photo by Ulrike Freitag.)

foodstuffs to the population of the Ḥijāz, and seem to have used their good connections with the port authorities for that. Thus, the connection between Bin Ḥimd and the al-Salāma family, who controlled the port, is remembered by the family as a crucial link in food security.<sup>43</sup> Given their international network, and the different currencies they were employing, it is not unlikely that they were benefitting from the rapidly changing values of currencies.<sup>44</sup> However, any concrete evidence of this is difficult to come by with the material at hand.

After the signature, Baṣa'r reminds Bin Ḥimd not to forget the distribution of the usual (*ḥaqq al-ʿāda*) gifts pertaining to the end of the year (*ḥaqq al-ʿamm al-jadīd*). It is in such formulations, as well as in the greetings and brief exchanges of news about each other's families, that a certain intimacy and long-standing relationship becomes evident, probably the basis of the trust that, according to most scholars, was so crucial to this type of long-distance trade.<sup>45</sup> It might have been exactly the chance to exchange more information that prompted merchants to write letters, in addition to the various shorter forms of communication, such as telegrams, available in the collection.

Apart from Ade's work, which in its discussion of merchant correspondence pays detailed attention to letters of exchange, there is not much literature on Arab merchant correspondence. However, the letters show the centrality of the correspondence for the functioning of the trading house, much like it was the case in European long-distance trade in the early modern period and well into the eighteenth century.<sup>46</sup> Because trading practices seem to have remained similar over long stretches of time, the following remarks also draw on the studies by Aslanian and Sood, thus referring back to the eighteenth century. Sood emphasizes that many Eurasian merchants of substance had recourse to a scribe, not least in order to keep copies of draft letters in order to be later able to prove one's claim.<sup>47</sup> As the boxes investigated for this article contain only correspondence directed to Muḥammad b. Ḥimd, and not enough different letters to check on the coherence of handwriting and style or otherwise by any one correspondent, I cannot comment on this issue. It is interesting to note the little booklet on grammar, which indicates the attention paid to language in outgoing correspondence. It might be interpreted as an indication of the relatively low level of formal schooling of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad, who might have felt the need for a reference work, or it could indicate that the trainees (who might also have served as scribes) in such an enterprise needed to deepen their knowledge of formal language in order to conduct the correspondence properly.

Sood's comments on the normal division of letters—a preamble, subject, and closing part—as well as his more detailed description of the composition of these parts, certainly apply to the more extensive letters received by Bin Ḥimd, discussed above.<sup>48</sup> Thus, questions about the correspondents' well-being and references to prior correspondence can be found both in the letters by Bā Faḳīh and by Baṣa'ar. In one way or other, God is usually invoked in the longer letters, though not in the short notes about payment or receipt of funds, like one written by the Bā Shanfar Brothers in Aden on November 4, 1939. Likewise, the transition to the main parts of the letter, as well as the transition to a brief final salute in these letters, fit Sood's observations.<sup>49</sup> In the letters, in contrast to notes on payments or receipts, the dates are usually in a header, although they are included in the last line in some of the older samples. Thus, the letters express a certain etiquette and, through reference to religion and family, appealed to values that were meant to bolster mutual obligations. In other words, the creation of trust in this way was "highly utilitarian."<sup>50</sup>

### The Trade Network: Its Scope and Composition

What can we say from the correspondence about Bin Ḥimd's network? Unfortunately, as long as it is unclear whether further correspondence exists and the entire corpus has been studied comprehensively, there is little way of establishing a perspective that differentiates the network over time (i.e., in its evolution), or allows more than a rough approximation of the intensity of contact.<sup>51</sup> Thus, the following comments will be based on



Figure 3. Bin Ḥimd's correspondents in the Red Sea Area.<sup>53</sup>

Table 1.

<b>Aden</b>	<b>Hodeida</b>	<b>Mecca</b>
al-Sharīf Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Rifā'ī	Abū Bakr b. Ḥasan al-'Aṭṭās	Aḥmad Bā Ḥaydar
Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh Bā Sindwa	Aḥmad Ḥasan Shayyādhil	'Abdallāh b. 'Umar
Sayyid Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn al-Ḥimḍ	'Abdallāh b. Ṣāliḥ Baṣa'r	'Umar M. Sa'īd Drayk and Brothers
Junayd 'Abd al-Qādir Bā Junayd	al-Khadim Ahmad Ghalīb Elwojeeh	Ḥāmid 'Abdallāh Bā Faḥīh
Khālīd 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Ḥimḍ	<b>Jeddah</b>	Muḥammad Nūr Aḥmad Shinkār & shurakā'
Khālīd 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Ḥimḍ & Ikhwānīh	'Abd al-Razzāq Ḥusām al-Dīn	<b>Medina</b>
'Abdallāh Aḥmad al-Ṣāfī	'Umar al-Jifrī	'Abdallāh M. Bassām
Sa'īd Aḥmad 'Umar Bā Zar'a & Ikhwānīh	Salīm b. Sālim Bā Jām	Syed Taha M.H. Osman (Sayyid Taha Muhammad Ḥusayn 'Uthmān)
Sālim Sa'īd Bā Ḥakīm	<b>Jizān</b>	<b>Port Sudan</b>
Salim & Mohamed Bin Mohamed Omer Bā Shanfer	Zāmil al-Ṣāliḥ Ḥalīm	Sa'īd Muḥammad Bā Wārith
<b>Asmara</b>	<b>Karachi</b>	<b>Qunfudha</b>
al-Sayyid 'Abd ar-Raḥmān b. 'Abdallāh Bā Faḥīh (Bafaghī)	Marzouk Mohamed Marzouk	Al-Sadat Mohamed & Aly A. Aldjifri (al-Jifrī)
<b>Basra</b>	<b>al-Luḥayya</b>	Balghayth b. 'Abdallāh 'Awad*
Sulaymān & Ḥamad al-Muḥammad al-Dhukair	Aḥmad b. Abkar al-Khudarī	Yāsīn b. 'Abdallāh al-Jifrī
<b>Bombay</b>	'Abd al-Wudūd b. Aḥmad Sālim 'Abd al-Wudūd	Aḥmad Saqqāf(?) b. 'Umar Bā Sindwa
Salih & Ebrahim Abdulla Alfazal (al-Faḥl)	<b>Manchester</b>	<b>Yanbu' al-Baḥr</b>
Muḥammad 'Umar Chandbhoy	Hadji Ali Akbar & Sons Ltd	Muḥammad Ḥāmid Jabur (Jabr?)
<b>Calcutta</b>		Muḥammad Ḥamad Jabr & Sons General Merchants and Steam Ship Agents
Hajee Selim Khongee		Muḥammad Yāsīn Ḥusayn Bakhīṭ
		'Abdallāh Aḥmad 'Āshūr & shurakā'

\*This could possibly be the son of 'Abdallāh Bin Zaqr.<sup>52</sup>

a cumulation of the data mined from the documents. Given that these range from 1919 until shortly after the death of Bin Ḥimd, they will show the network in its full range, but cannot take into account whether some contacts might have ceased in the period under consideration, or others been added. That would require a much more detailed analysis.

The bulk of Bin Ḥimd's business partners can be found along the Red Sea. There are no comparative data for the different ports on the Red Sea for the period under consideration. From the data available in the works by Gavin, Issawi, and Perkins, it would seem that Aden was by far the most significant port in the region, followed by Jeddah and Port Sudan.<sup>54</sup> The family itself does not seem to have been spread out as far as, for example, the Bā Nājā or the al-ʿAṭṭās.

From the western shores of the Red Sea, Saʿīd Muḥammad Bā Wārith in Port Sudan wrote on January 2, 1939, enquiring about a money transfer to Aḥmad Bā Ḥaydar in Mecca. Before Port Sudan was developed, beginning in 1904, Suakin had been the main port on that shore of the Red Sea, and an important base of Hadhrami and Jeddah merchants.<sup>55</sup> It is also interesting that the only contact in Eritrea that appears in the correspondence comes from a certain Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbdallāh Bā Faqīh, residing in Asmara. Although the bulk of Hadhramis in Eritrea—and Bā Faqīh clearly is of Hadhrami descent—continued to reside in Massawa even in the twentieth century, there are others (like members of the Bā Khashab family) who also made this move to the new colonial capital (since 1900).<sup>56</sup> However, according to his grandson, Bin Ḥimd is said to also have corresponded with merchants from Massawa.<sup>57</sup>

Contacts were clearly much more intense with merchants in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. In Hodeidah, Bin Ḥimd corresponded with Abū Bakr b. Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭās, Aḥmad Ḥasan Shayyādhil, and ʿAbdallāh b. Ṣāliḥ Baṣaʿr, and with a merchant who apparently was present in both Hodeidah and the inland city of Zabīd, al-Khadim Ahmad Ghalib Elwojeeh (al-khādīm Aḥmad Ghālīb al-Wajīh?), the name of whom seems to indicate a relationship of dependence on somebody else (perhaps a former slave?). Further north, in al-Luḥayya, correspondence was maintained with Aḥmad b. Abkar al-Khudarī and ʿAbd al-Wudūd b. Aḥmad Sālim ʿAbd al-Wudūd. From Jizān, Bin Ḥimd was sent accounts indicating a mutual exchange of goods from a certain Zāmil al-Ṣāliḥ Ḥalīm (al-Salīm?). In Qunfudha, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Bin Ḥimd maintained relations with the *sāda*<sup>58</sup> Muḥammad &

‘Alī A. al-Jifrī, with Balghayth b. ‘Abdallāh ‘Awaḍ and Yāsīn b. ‘Abdallāh al-Jifrī (possibly a relative of Muḥammad and ‘Alī). Contacts extended north of Jeddah to Yanbū‘ al-Baḥr, possibly because of its importance as the harbor of Medina and in clear distinction to earlier patterns when winds had led to the creation of distinct northern and southern trade circuits. From Yanbū‘, Bin Ḥimd received letters from a certain Muḥammad Ḥamid Jabr, from Muḥammad Ḥamad Jabr & Sons, General Merchants and Steam Ship Agents, from Muḥammad Yāsīn Ḥusayn Bakhīt and ‘Abdallāh Aḥmad ‘Ashūr & Shurakā’ (partners). Although there are still a number of Hadhrami names present, it is striking that there seem to be fewer than in Aden, although it is not possible in all cases to identify the regional/ethnic origin of correspondents.

Aden was the gateway to the Indian Ocean. In addition, this port replaced Jeddah as the major stopover and *entrepôt* of trade between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean in the twentieth century.<sup>59</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that it played a pivotal role in Bin Ḥimd’s network. Nine different correspondents appear, ten if we distinguish between Khālīd ‘Abd al-Laṭīf al-Ḥimd and a firm called Khālīd ‘Abd al-Laṭīf and Brothers, which presumably was another outfit of Khālīd al-Ḥimd. It seems to have been usual practice among merchants to sometimes act alone and sometimes in conjunction with brothers, sons, or other associates, although it would require a larger corpus of documents to say more about such practices. Indeed, the role of the family seems to have been important in Aden, but only there, and we cannot be sure about the actual family ties between the Jeddah and Aden branches of Bin Ḥimd.<sup>60</sup> Two of the merchant houses were classified as “General Merchant and Commission Agents” (al-Rifā‘ī and Bā Zar‘a & Ikhwānih), eight out of nine are of clear Hadhrami origin (Bā Sindwa, two from the al-Ḥimd family, Bā Junayd, al-Ṣāfi, Bā Zar‘a, Bā Ḥakīm, and Bā Shanfar). All of these originally hailed from Wādī Daw‘an, from where many of the leading mercantile families in Jeddah also originated.<sup>61</sup> Given the importance of trust in this type of long-distance trade, the common origin even within Hadhramaut might well have been an additional factor in the establishment of merchant relations.

From Calcutta, Hajee Selim Khongee wrote; in Bombay, Saleh and Ibrahim Abdallah Alfazal (al-Faḍl, either descendants of Sayyid Faḍl b. ‘Alawī b. Sahl or of the Najdī family by the same name) as well as Muḥammad ‘Umar Chandbhoy were correspondents; and in Karachi, a certain Marzouk





Figure 4. Bin Himdi's correspondents outside the Red Sea.<sup>53</sup>

Mohamed Marzouk. In Baṣrā, Muḥammad Bin Ḥimd corresponded with a certain Sulaymān & Ḥamad al-Muḥammad al-Dhukair.<sup>62</sup>

From Europe, we find a letter by Hadji Ali Akbar & Sons Ltd., dated April 18, 1938. On the recommendation of the Jeddah merchant Ḥajj Zaynal ‘Alī Riḍā, this merchant house offered their services as one of the foremost Muslim merchant houses in Europe, apparently mainly trading in textiles and seeking to establish a trading relationship. What is interesting is that Ḥajj Zaynal ‘Alī Riḍā, himself of Iranian origin but from a family that by then had been resident in Jeddah for about eighty years, recommended an Iranian merchant in a city better known for its Lebanese cloth merchants.<sup>64</sup> This points to the existence of another network of merchants of Iranian origin.

Bin Ḥimd also maintained intensive contacts with Mecca and Medina, though determining whether through financial networks or in actual trade would require further investigation. This is an interesting point, as one of the few local historians writing about merchants classifies them by distinguishing between importers and those who traded inland. According to Bin Ḥimd’s grandson, this distinction is untenable.<sup>65</sup> In Mecca, the names of Aḥmad Bā Ḥaydar, ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar, ‘Umar M. Sa‘īd Drayk and Brothers, Ḥāmid ‘Abdallāh Bā Faqīh, and Muḥammad Nūr Aḥmad Shinkār & shurakā’ appear. The latter was an Indian trader and associate (*sharik*) of Sa‘īd and Muhammad Bin Zaqr, descendants of a former *shaykh* of the Hadhrami community in Jeddah. In 1927, Shinkār founded one of the first motor companies in Arabia.<sup>66</sup> One of the two correspondents in Medina was ‘Abdallāh M. Bassām, representative of a Najdī merchant house that had established itself in the Ḥijāz (the other is a certain Syed Taha M.H. Osman—Sayyid Ṭaha M. H. ‘Uthmān). Of Bassām, we know that he contacted Bin Ḥimd in order to organize the transfer of the remarkable sum of 30,000 (rupees?) to Bombay (on 5. R.A. 1366 = January 27, 1947). Did the news of his death reach the Ḥijāz so late?

Quite a number of names refer of course to contacts in Jeddah, even if these are not identified further. Among them are ‘Abd al-Razzāq Ḥusām al-Dīn, Salīm b. Sālīm Bā Jamjūm, and ‘Umar al-Jifrī. The location of five other correspondents has to remain unidentified. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the letters I was able to see do not contain a single female name, be it as correspondent or as somebody explicitly mentioned in the letters—as distinct from being part of a family that was not further specified. It is interesting that the thirteenth-century collection analyzed by Guo does

contain references to mothers, daughters, and other women, although none of these were mentioned by name.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, the lack of explicit mention does not mean that women might not have played an important role in the formation and possibly the management of merchant capital due to their rights to inheritance and dowry.<sup>68</sup> Whether this was indeed the case, however, cannot be confirmed at the moment.

### Tentative Conclusions

The documents allow an insight into the network of a Hadhrami merchant who was mostly active in the grain trade, but also involved in money lending.<sup>69</sup> The documents demonstrate that Muḥammad b. Aḥmad was a twentieth century merchant who clearly combines the three layers of trade identified by Miran, namely, intercoastal, regional, and international, even if regional trade, and mostly in the southern Red Sea, is probably what Muḥammad Bin Ḥimd was most invested in.<sup>70</sup> He was predominantly, but probably not exclusively, a wholesale import–export merchant in the local terminology, but at the same time also acted as agent (*wakīl*) for other merchants and had a sideline as money lender.<sup>71</sup> Even if the few extant studies on Hadhrami trade in the Red Sea do not mention him, he is probably typical of many merchants active in regional maritime trade in the Red Sea.<sup>72</sup> Given the importance of Jeddah as a redistribution port for goods in the Red Sea, notably those that were imported from India, we can well imagine Bin Ḥimd to have played a part in that specific trade, although his redistributive network seems to have been more on the Arabian than on the African coast.<sup>73</sup> Similar to the sons of Muhammad Bin Zaqr, his network combined Hadhrami as well as some non-Hadhrami members and thus allowed him access to goods from beyond the Red Sea ports in which most of his Hadhrami business partners were based.<sup>74</sup>

Besides documenting a network that was predominantly, but not exclusively Hadhrami and mostly, but not exclusively centered on the eastern coastline of the Red Sea, they provide insight into the daily practices of an international merchant based at Jeddah. This concerns his methods of working, documenting his work and corresponding (receipts, telegrams and letters sent by boat), as well as the different currencies in circulation at the time. The documents mention rupees, silver riyal, gold sterling,

and Egyptian pounds, although there might have been more currencies involved in this trade (Maria Theresa thalers, for example).

Many of the letters have a flavor that suggests a resemblance to the ways in which eighteenth-century Eurasian merchants were trading, which might have much older roots. Although I cannot say anything about the concrete business arrangements of Muḥammad Bin Ḥimd, the letters remind one of the kinds of services rendered by business partners to one another as described by Goitein for the eleventh century on the basis of the Geniza documents. We also have evidence of both partnerships with apparent strangers (as in the case of Basra or Bombay) as well as within the family and within the wider Hadhrami network.<sup>75</sup> However, only a full examination of the documents might show how the partnerships compare with those of other communities, like the Julfa Armenians or the Livorno Sephardim.<sup>76</sup>

As interesting as these findings are, they leave much open. Whose ships did Muḥammad Bin Ḥimd use? For Egypt, we have a letter from Gellatly Hankey & Co., dated August 1, 1923, dealing with the payment for cargo. Gellatly Hankey & Co. was not only a shipping firm owning the Mogul Steamship Company, agents of the Khedival Mail Line (as well as, in Sudan, of a large number of further lines serving the Red Sea), the firm also held various concessions and a banking house. They had started their business in Suakin and Jeddah in the mid-1880s, and, after the Saudi take-over of Jeddah, for some time were among those asked to bankroll the government.<sup>77</sup> But what about transport along the shores of the Red Sea? We know from other accounts that dhows continued to play a major role in local and regional trade, but also, that smaller steamers served these ports. And who owned the boats? Certainly, most of the sailing vessels were in local hands.<sup>78</sup> What do we know about the routes which the goods took, and about their transport?

How large was Bin Ḥimd's firm and what was the volume of his trade? What other storage facilities did he hold in Jeddah besides the large town house of the family? With whom did the family associate and or intermarry, and to what extent did this strengthen business relations? To what extent was he involved in the Hadhrami community, or to what extent had he, for example by intermarriage, become "Hijazi"—a distinction regularly made on the basis of dress, marriage, but also, presumably, political affiliations?

Did Bin Ḥimd maintain relations with Hadhramaut proper, and did he know most of his business partners in person? What was his status in Jeddah—besides the indications of official recognition mentioned above? Did he deal with the Saudi government, for example, by selling them grain? Was he, like so many other merchants, also asked to bankroll the government, notably (but by no means exclusively) during the difficult years of the early 1930s? And, indeed, how did the economic crisis affect him economically as well as politically?<sup>79</sup> Will a full examination of his letters allow us to analyze the development of his network over time?

Finally, if we assume that Bin Ḥimd was typical of Ḥadhramī merchants, how did their commercial practices and social strategies compare to those of other ethnic groups in Jeddah? Waltz's work on the nineteenth-century Egyptian merchants suggests some homogeneity even across geographical and temporal distances. But how did the interface between, for example, Hadhrami and Indian merchants work, or indeed Western firms such as Gellatly Hankey? It can only be hoped that future research, not only on Bin Himd's papers but also, for example, the voluminous business correspondence of Harry St. John Philby held at the St. Antony Middle East Centre archives, will help to answer these and other questions.

## NOTES

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1. Philippe Pétriat and I have been shown various documents held by families, but neither of us nor colleagues working on other parts of the Red Sea have managed to access collections like the one described here. However, it seems that both King Fahd Library as well as Dārat al-Malik 'Abd al-'Azīz might well hold comprehensive sets of merchant letters.
2. Personal communication, Professor Fahd al-Sammārī, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, February 29, 2016.

3. Gagan D. S. Sood, "'Correspondence is Equal to Half a Meeting': The Composition and Comprehension of Letters in Eighteenth-Century Islamic Eurasia," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 50, nos. 2/3 (2007): 172–214; Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers. The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009); and Sebouh D. Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa*, California World History Library 17 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011).
4. Li Guo, *Commerce, Culture, and Community in a Red Sea Port in the Thirteenth Century*, *Islamic History and Civilization* 52 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2004), notably 58–66.
5. Court Records are also the basis of Michael Gilsenan's articles on the Hadhrami diaspora, e.g., "Topics and Queries for a History of Arab Families and Inheritance in Southeast Asia: Some Preliminary Thoughts," in *Southeast Asia and the Middle East: Islam, Movement, and the Longue Durée*, ed. Eric Tagliacozzo (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 199–234; and "Translating Colonial Fortunes: Dilemmas of Inheritance in Muslim and English Laws across a Nineteenth Century Diaspora," *Comparative Studies in South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 31, no. 2 (2011), 355–371. C.f. Nelly Hanna, *Making Big Money in 1600: The Life and Times of Isma'il Abu Taqiyya, Egyptian Merchant* (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998).
6. Nancy Um, *The Merchant Houses of Mocha: Trade and Architecture in an Indian Ocean port*, *Publications on the Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009).
7. Mafalda Ade, *Picknick mit den Paschas: Aleppo und die levantinische Handelsfirma Fratelli Poche (1853–1880)*, *Beiruter Texte und Studien* 133 (Würzburg, Germany: Ergon-Verlag, 2013).
8. C.f. Metin Atmaca, "Review of *Picknick mit den Paschas*," *Insight Turkey* 16, no. 2 (2014), <http://www.insightturkey.com/picknick-mit-den-paschas-aleppo-und-die-levantinische-handelsfirma-fratelli-poche-1853-1880/book-reviews/1442> (accessed November 6, 2015) and Malte Fuhrmann's review of *Picknick mit den Paschas*, *BSOAS* 76, no. 3 (2013), 513–14.
9. Terence Walz, "Family Archives in Egypt: New Light on Nineteenth-Century Provincial Trade." Extract from CNRS, *L'Égypte au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Aix-en-Provence, June 4–7, 1979, 15–33, <https://www.academia>.

- edu/740366/Family\_Archives\_in\_Egypt\_New\_light\_on\_Nineteenth-Century\_Provincial\_Trade.
10. Hadhrami merchants play a major part in the studies of Linda Boxberger, such as her *On the Edge of Empire: Hadhramawt, Emigration, and the Indian Ocean, 1880s–1930s* SUNY series in Near Eastern studies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002); Ulrike Freitag, *Indian Ocean Migrants and State Formation in Hadhramaut: Reforming the Homeland*, Social, Economic, and Political Studies of the Middle East and Asia 87 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers, 2003); and Leif O. Manger, *The Hadrami Diaspora: Community-Building on the Indian Ocean Rim* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), as well as in collections by Ulrike Freitag and William Clarence-Smith, eds., *Hadhrami Traders, Scholars, and Statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s–1960s* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers, 1997); Huub d. Jonge and Nico Kaptein, eds., “Transcending Borders: Arabs, Politics, Trade and Islam in Southeast Asia,” *Proceedings / Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 5 (Leiden, The Netherlands: KITLV Press, 2002); and Ahmed I. Abushouk and Hassan A. Ibrahim, eds., “The Hadhrami Diaspora in Southeast Asia: Identity Maintenance or Assimilation?” *Social, Economic, and Political Studies of the Middle East and Asia* 107 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2009).
  11. Philippe Pétriat, *Le négoce des lieux saints. Négociants hadramis Djedda, 1850–1950* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2016), notably 251–323.
  12. The collection number is 36.
  13. It remains unclear at this point which part of the collection was sold, information provided by Shaykh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Bin Ḥimḍ, Jeddah, February 24, 2016.
  14. During my visit to the Dāra on March 1, 2016, I was allowed to see some of the newly preserved materials, although the box I consulted only contained letters, not some of the other materials described below. But there are ninety boxes awaiting scrutiny.
  15. Wahīb Aḥmad Fāḍil Kābili, *al-Ḥiraḥfiyyūn fī madīnat Jidda: (fī ‘l-qarn al-rābi‘ ‘ashar al-hijrī)*, 3rd ed. ([s.n.]: [s.n.], 2004 [1425]), 38–39.
  16. The works consulted were Muḥammad Bā Maṭraf, *Jāmi‘ a’lām al-munhājirīn al-muntasibīn ilā ‘l-Yaman wa-qabā’ilihim*, 2nd ed., 4 vols. (Aden, Yemen: Dār al-Hamdānī, 1984); Muḥammad al-Maghribī, *A’lām al-Hijāz*, 2nd ed., 4 vols. (Jeddah, Saudi Arabia: Maṭābi‘ Dār al-Bilād,

- 1415/1994), as well as a number of recent works on Hadhrami history including Boxberger, *On the Edge of Empire*.
17. In the family, the first names “Muḥammad” and “Aḥmad” alternate between father and son every generation, which makes the exact identification of ancestors sometimes difficult.
  18. The following is based on a text, “Usrat bin Ḥimd,” sent to Talāl Bakur by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Bin Ḥimd and communicated to me by the late Talāl Bakur, who I thank warmly for this service. Shaykh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Bin Ḥimd kindly provided me with a second copy of the text, which according to him was compiled in the context of activities related to the revival of old Jeddah.
  19. The use of drums had been introduced into ‘Alawī mawlıds in the fourteenth century C.E.; see Anne K. Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea: Family Networks in East Africa, 1860–1925*, Indian Ocean series (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 233 n80.
  20. Personal communication, Sultan Ghālib al-Qu‘ayṭī, November 25, 2015.
  21. Personal communication, Shaykh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad bin Ḥimd, February 24, 2016.
  22. Although the family history mentions that he was born ca. 1300 h. (1882–83), the commemorative plaque on the house gives 1885 as his birth date. His grandson is not certain of the correct date; personal communication, Muḥammad Aḥmad Bin Ḥimd, Jeddah, February 24, 2016.
  23. Visit to the house in old Jeddah with Ra‘d Bin Ḥimd on February 21, 2016 and personal communication provided by Muḥammad Muḥsin al-‘Amūdī, the current leaseholder of the shops downstairs.
  24. Personal communication, Shaykh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Bin Ḥimd, Jeddah, February 24, 2016.
  25. Umm al-Qurā 300, September 5, 1930, 2.
  26. Umm al-Qurā 338, June 5, 1931, 2. It is curious that Pétriat does not mention him although he lists most of the other participants in the conference. Pétriat, *Le négoce*, 338.
  27. Umm al-Qurā 406, September 23, 1932, 2.
  28. Personal communication, al-‘Amūdī, during a visit of the old house on February 21, 2016, as well as from Shaykh Muhammad Ahmad Bin Ḥimd, Jeddah, February 24, 2016.
  29. Personal communication, Shaykh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Bin Ḥimd, Jeddah, February 24, 2016.



30. Walz, "Family Archives in Egypt," 31–33.
31. Ade, *Picknick mit den Paschas*, 122–23.
32. TBA, PRO, FO 371/10809, Jeddah Report July 21–August 1925, 323; IOR/L/PS/12/2073, Jeddah Report September–October 1931, 3.
33. *Ibid.*, 115–17.
34. Jonathan Miran, "Red Sea Translocals: Hadrami Migration, Entrepreneurship, and Strategies of Integration in Eritrea, 1840s–1970s," *Northeast African Studies* 12, no. 1 (2012): 135–6.
35. Written communication from Shaykh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Bin Ḥimd, transmitted by Khalid Nasir, April 18, 2017.
36. Ade, *Picknick mit den Paschas*, 203–6.
37. Letter by Ṣāliḥ Baṣaʿr, 5. Rajab 1362 (July 8, 1943), mentions the death of Ṣāliḥ ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Baṣaʿr. Letter held by Dārat al-Malik ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, collection no. 36 (no box number yet).
38. Gagan D. S. Sood, "The Informational Fabric of Eighteenth-Century India and the Middle East: Couriers, Intermediaries and Postal Communication," *Modern Asian Studies* 43, no. 5 (2009), 1085–1116.
39. Unfortunately, the measure of *qadaḥ* seems to have varied widely.
40. R. J. Gavin, *Aden under British Rule, 1839–1967* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1975), 309–10; personal communication, Steven Serels, May 29, 2015.
41. Bat-Zion E. Klorman, *Traditional Society in Transition: The Yemeni Jewish Experience*, Brill Reference Library of Judaism 39 (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 2014), 98–99.
42. Letter by Ṣāliḥ Baṣaʿr, 5. Rajab 1362 (July 8, 1943), Dārat al-Malik ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, collection no. 36 (no box number yet).
43. Personal communication, Shaykh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Bin Ḥimd, Jeddah, February 24, 2016.
44. Personal communication, Steven Serels, May 29, 2015.
45. On this issue, albeit for the Julfan Armenian network of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, 166–201, c.f. Ade, *Picknick mit den Paschas*, 113, and Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 153.
46. Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 170–6.
47. Sood, "Correspondence is Equal," 177; Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, 86–102.
48. Sood, "Correspondence is Equal," 184, 186–8. Note that Sood refers more to

- Persian expressions than to Arabic ones.
49. Ibid., 189.
  50. Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 181, c.f. 177–93.
  51. Marten Düring and Ulrich Eumann, “Historische Netzwerkforschung: Ein neuer Ansatz in den Geschichtswissenschaften” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft: Zeitschrift für historische Sozialwissenschaft* 39, no. 3 (2013): 369–90. Ade’s work is conscientious with regard to historical developments, intensity of contacts, etc.
  52. Pétriat, “Diaspora or Network,” 193.
  53. Although the size of the circles indicates the relative number of contacts in the respective cities, it is highly likely that not all correspondents are mentioned in the documents examined. Hence, the relative importance of the cities can only be seen as an indication. The ports of Umluj and Massawa are mentioned as correspondence with these ports was seen in 2016. This map is a derivative of “Blank SVG map (outline) of the Arabian Peninsula” by Peter Fitzgerald, found on Wikimedia Commons ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arabian\\_Peninsula\\_blank.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arabian_Peninsula_blank.svg)), used under Public Domain. The work by Constanze Fertig is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>.
  54. Charles Issawi, *The Economic History of the Middle East, 1800–1914* (Chicago University Press, 1966), 328–29; Kenneth J. Perkins, *Port Sudan: The Creation of a Colonial City* (Middle East Studies Association of North America, 1989), 74; and Gavin, *Aden under British Rule*, 446–7.
  55. Manger, *The Hadrami Diaspora*, 67–76; and Muhammad A. Elfateh, “Suakin (Sudan) and the Colonial Architecture of the Ottoman Empire in the Red Sea Region” (PhD, Brandenburgische Technische Universität Cottbus-Senftenberg, 2015), part 1.
  56. Miran, “Red Sea Translocals,” 135–36; email communication by Philippe Pétriat, December 12, 2015. On the importance of trade links between Jeddah and Massawa, c.f. For a comparison of the Berbera and Massawa trade with Jeddah, see Richard Pankhurst, “The Trade of the Gulf of Aden Ports of Africa in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 3, no. 1 (1965): 36–81, 51–53.
  57. Personal communication, Shaykh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Bin Ḥimīd, Jeddah, February 24, 2016.

58. *Sayyid* (pl. *sāda*): a person claiming descent from the Prophet Muḥammad.
59. Gavin, *Aden under British Rule*, 477. Gavin lists the value of the Aden seaborne trade, showing a steady decrease for the years 1928–35 due to the world economic crisis.
60. See, in contrast, Pétriat, *Le négoce*, 262–69.
61. William H. Ingrams, *A Report on the Social, Economic and Political Condition of the Hadhramaut*, Great Britain, Colonial Office. Colonial no. 123 (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1936), 166.
62. With the exception of Chandhboy, all these names also appear in the correspondence of Bā Nājā, as Philippe Pétriat informed me (personal communication, December 26, 2015). It would be interesting to know if they were correspondents also of other Jeddah merchant houses.
63. This map is a derivative of “Blank map of the world large” by Axlerafia, found on Wikimedia Commons (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ABlankMap-World-large-noborders2.png>), used under CC BY-SA 3.0. The work by Constanze Fertig is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>.
64. The cable address is given as Shirazi Manchester and the letterhead is in Persian, mentioning him as “Ḥāḡḡī ‘Alī Akbar Tāḡer-e Šīrāzī wa-pesarān limited.” Could it be that we are dealing here with the famous Iranian merchant ‘Alī Akbar Shirāzī, who had opened offices in London and Manchester in the late nineteenth century? Gad G. Gilbar, “Muslim *tujjār* of the Middle East and Their Commercial Networks in the Long Nineteenth Century,” *Studia Islamica*, 100/101 (2005): 200. For Arab and Armenian merchants in Manchester, see Fred Halliday, “The Millet of Manchester: Arab Merchants and Cotton Trade,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 19, no. 2 (1992), 159–176, accessed May 12, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/195698>.
65. Kābili, *al-Ḥiraḡyūn*, 39–40. According to Shaykh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Bin Ḥimd, the book contains many similar mistakes due to a very limited enquiry.
66. Philippe Pétriat, “Diaspora or Network? The Hadhrami Diaspora Reconsidered through the Lens of Trade,” in *Hadhramaut and its Diaspora: Yemeni Politics, Identity and Migration*, ed. Noel Brehony, 187–204 (London, I. B. Tauris, 2017), here p. 191–193.

67. Guo, "Commerce," 7–9.
68. For a similar situation among the Sephardim, see Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 23.
69. The following statements are based on the proviso that any additional documents by Muḥammad Aḥmad Bin Ḥimd do not contain correspondence in significantly new directions, or pertaining to different types of activities. Given the annual arrangement, this seems a likely assumption, but one that cannot, at the present moment, be proven.
70. Jonathan Miran, "Mapping Space and Mobility in the Red Sea Region, c. 1500–1950," *History Compass* 12, no. 2 (2014): 203.
71. For this classification, see Kābilī, *al-Ḥiraḥīyyūn*, 38–39.
72. Janet Ewald and William Clarence-Smith, "The Economic Role of the Hadhrami Diaspora in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, 1820s to 1930s," in *Hadhrami Traders, Scholars, and Statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s–1960s*, ed. Ulrike Freitag and William Clarence-Smith, 281–96 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers, 1997); Pétriat, *Le négoce*.
73. For Jeddah's role in the redistributive trade of goods from India, see Richard Pankhurst, "Indian Trade with Ethiopia, the Gulf of Aden and the Horn of Africa in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Cahiers d'études africaines: Revue publiée avec le concours du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique et du Centre National du Livre* 14, no. 55,3 (1974): 457.
74. C.f. Pétriat, "Diaspora or Network?"
75. C.f. S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, vol. 1: *Economic Foundations* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 164–83.
76. See the comparative section in Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 149–52.
77. George Blake, *Gellatly's, 1862–1962: A Short History of the Firm* (London: Blackie & Son Ltd., 1962), 108, 128, 138.
78. Personal communication, Shaykh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Bin Ḥimd, February 24, 2016.
79. C.f. Pétriat, *Le négoce*, 332–40.

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