

Shelfmark: BL Or. 5552.2–2a

Recto: Fatimid state document dated 4 Rajab 523H / 23 June 1129, reporting that two trustworthy witnesses from Alexandria had given testimony, and that a document had come in answer to their testimony. One of their names has been preserved: Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusayn b Ḥātīm b. Ṣadaqa b. ‘Umar. Contains a registration mark (*al-ḥamdu li-llāh ‘alā ni ‘amih*). Another scribe has reused the document to copy the Fihrist of Shemu’el b. Hofni ga’ on.

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Registration mark in side margin

1. [الحمد لله على نعمه

Main text

1. الرابع من رجب سنة ثلث وعشرين وخمسمائة و صح عندني انه
2. كتابه بجواب شاهدين من الشهود المعدلين بثغر الاسكندرية
3. حماه الله تعالى وهما ابو علي الحسين بن حاتم بن صدقة بن عمر

1. (Registration mark) Praise be to God for his bounties

1. The fourth of Rajab, in the year 523. I verify that this is
2. his document, as ratified/attested by two certified witness in the district of Alexandria,
3. may God, may he be exalted, protect it, and they are Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusayn b. Ḥātīm b. Ṣadaqa b. ‘Umar
4. [and ...

Commentary:

An official document belonging to X (unnamed person: the هـ of kitab) was presented somewhere, but it needed to be verified, so two witnesses ratified it, presumably in Alexandria. The ratified document was then sent to a chancery where our writer recorded its contents, and equally importantly, registered the names of the two witnesses who had vouched for its authenticity-. This is a bifolio register destined for the central Fatimid archives. Without more information on person X, and on the nature of this كتاب (was it a receipt, a legal deed, a rescript?), the document remains tantalizing and opaque, but useful as evidence of registration and archiving.

** in this telling, I am assuming "jawāb" to mean certify/confirm--rather than the usual 'reply'.*

*** The phrase could equally mean that they had undergone moral certification [ta’dīl] in Alex--i.e. without necessarily being there now.*



Verso: Shemu'el b. Hofni, Fihrist.