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Yāqūt's Sources on the Slavs Included in His *Muġam al-Buldān*

Abstract

The great 13th century scholar Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, compiled his well-known geographical dictionary – *Muġam al-Buldān* – using an incredibly vast corpus of sources that allowed him to describe the lands lying beyond the realm of Islam. The aim of this paper is to identify the sources he used to describe issues dealing with the Slavs or those peoples and areas thought by Arab writers to belong to or be connected with the Slavs. The results shed some light on the state of knowledge of this area among 13th century inhabitants of the caliphate. At the same time, the author's analysis of the methods employed to compose the material on the Slavs that appears in the *Dictionary* helped determine the aim and the role of this work in the caliphate.

Keywords

Slavs in Arab sources, *adab* literature, medieval Arabic geography.

The great geographical dictionary *Muġam al-Buldān*, is regarded as one of the most influential sources on geography in the 13th century caliphate. It was compiled by Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī between 1224 and 1228, who mostly used written sources but also in some cases oral information, to compose the work. He did not confine the text to strictly geographical matters but rather, in line with the typical *adab* method of composition, he enriched the material with additional issues, such as a short history of the area in question, religious, cultural, biographical items in the form of anecdotes (*aḥbār*) and sometimes a literary production composed in, about or in any way connected with the described area. His approach to presenting his information was simple yet innovative and brilliant compared with the other geographical works or encyclopedias of the

time. He arranged the material in alphabetical order and preceded his work with a truly sophisticated introduction in which two parts are clearly distinguishable.

The first part is a typical preface – Yāqūt determines the range of interest of his work, its main aim and the reasons why he decided to compose *The Dictionary*. Here he also reveals his main sources.

The second part of the introduction consists of five chapters. The first four provide a summary of geographical knowledge, including the achievements of Greeks and certain other nations. Yāqūt discusses views on the shape of the Earth and the methods of calculating the surface. He also describes the division of the Earth into seven *iqḷīms*, and explains certain geographical, administrative and other similar terms frequently used in his work. At the end of the chapter he discusses the opinions of *fuqahā'* regarding different kinds of taxes levied in various lands of the caliphate according to the way they were conquered. The final introductory chapter visibly differs from the parts preceding it. It is composed of small literary units like *faḍā'il*, *maḥāsin* and *ḥaṣā'is*.¹ Its purpose appears to be to entertain the reader who might be exhausted after perusing the scientific texts presented in the preceding parts. Hence, the structure of the introduction is typical of *adab* literature, in particular encyclopedias, where serious matters are discussed at the beginning of the main chapter and the entertaining material placed at the end.

The main corpus of the dictionary takes the form of entries arranged alphabetically. Usually the layout of the material in a particular entry follows a specific order, especially if it describes typical geographical phenomena, so that some parts can be discerned.

The first part is philological in form, providing, in this case, a description of the vocalization of the name of the phenomenon, often together with its variants and sometimes also including the etymology of it. The second part can be named the first geographical section. Here Yāqūt describes the latitude and the longitude of the place, what of climate (*iqḷīm*) it is placed in, the zodiac signs, sometimes, especially if he is discussing vast areas such as a province or geographical region he lists the main cities, rivers, mountains and so on. The third part is composed of certain tidbits, such as interesting news – *mirabilia*: mainly *ʿaḡā'ib*, but also *ḥaṣā'is* or *ḡarā'ib*. Here Yāqūt includes pieces of poetry, information about the religious life of the inhabitants, their customs and traditions. This component is followed by a historical part with some anecdotes – *aḥbār* – dealing with some episodes from the history of the place. This section is followed by the second geographical part, in which we find information typical of a *al-masālik wa-l-mamālik* work – hence, itineraries connected with the area.

¹ A thoroughly annotated translation of the preface and introductory chapters cf. Jwaideh, W., *The Introductory Chapters of Yāqūt's Muʿjam al-Buldān*, Leiden 1959.

The final part of the entry should be classified as biographical as it consists of certain anecdotes about the people in some way connected with the area.

The above description refers to a typical, but also an ideal entry. However, it should be emphasized that many of the entries lack some of the parts listed above. It is worth pointing out that in some entries on places which Yāqūt personally saw and knew, he offers some remarks based on his own observations – *‘iyān*. The layout of the material in each entry, its structure and the character of the information indicate that the primary purpose of the work was to be popular reading material akin to an *adab* text, and thus not only aimed at professional geographers, astronomers or astrologists.

The geographical material gathered in *The Dictionary* extends beyond the borders of *Dār al-Islām* to include information on bordering or remote lands and peoples, among them the Slavs.

The aim of this research was to assess the state of knowledge of Slavs among 13th century Arabs as presented in Yāqūt's *Geographical Dictionary* and to show the work as an example of *adab* writing.

In this study several entries connected with the Slavic peoples have been used. The criteria of choice were as follows:

1. An entry includes information about the Slavs
2. An entry includes information about the area in which the Slavs lived
3. An entry describes lands considered by Arab writers to belong to the Slavs
4. An entry describes peoples thought by Arab geographers to be Slavs
5. An entry concerns regions or peoples which were in some way connected with the Slavs, or where the term Slavs or terms related to the Slavs appears

Three different editions of *Muġam al-Buldān* were used in this study. The first is *Jacut's geographisches Wörterbuch* edited by F. Wüstenfeld,² the second is the Egyptian edition³ and the last was edited in Beirut.⁴ There are slight differences between some of the studied entries located in the editions used for this research.

The entry *Şaqḻab*:

This entry begins with a typical philological introduction with instructions on how to pronounce the term correctly. The rest of the material on *Şaqḻab* is based on different authorities. Yāqūt refers to several sources and five of them are quoted with the names of their authors, one mentioned indirectly and

² *Jacut's geographisches Wörterbuch*, (ed.) F. Wüstenfeld, VI vols, Leipzig 1866–1873.

³ Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muġam al-Buldān*, (eds) Muḥammad Amīn al-Ḥāniġī, Şayḥ Aḥmad b. al-Amīn aŞ-Şanqīṭī VI vols, Mişr 1906.

⁴ Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muġam al-Buldān*, V vols, Bayrūt 1977=1397.

one undisclosed source is relatively easy to identify. The first source quoted by name is Ibn al-A^crābī,⁵ a philologist living at the turn of the 9th century. None of his work has survived. Ibn al-A^crābī's comment quoted by Yāqūt is not geographical but provides a brief description of a Slav: *aš-šiqḷāb ar-rağul al-abyaḍ*⁶ – “A Slav man is a man with the white (skin)”. Another remark is ascribed to a certain Abū ^cAmr, here introduced only by his *kunya*. He can clearly be identified as Abū ^cAmr ibn ^cAlā' who lived in the 8th century, the famous philologist and teacher of al-Ašma^cī and Abū ^cUbayda. His work had not survived. Here his quoted remark is also very short and concerns, like the former fragment, the appearance of a male Slav. The third source is referred to as being Abū Maṣṣūr who may be identified as Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad, also known as al-Azharī, from the 10th century, the author of the great lexicographical dictionary *Tahḍīb al-Luğa*. The information about the Slavs found in Yāqūt's *Dictionary* probably comes from al-Azharī's *opus magnum*. The next quoted source is Hišām ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Kalbī, who in Yāqūt's *Dictionary* is introduced only by his *nasab*. It is from him that Yāqūt obtains his genealogy of different peoples modeled after “Genesis”. The final disclosed source, dating from the 10th century, is al-Mas^cūdī's description of different groups of Slavs, their kings, religion, the natural resources of their lands, the trade and, finally, their neighbours. The account provided by this *adīb* and geographer, cited by Yāqūt, is a somewhat loose summary of a passage devoted to the Slavs, their genealogy, their kings and lands from his work *Murūğ aḍ-Ḍahab*⁷.

The source mentioned indirectly is quoted by Ibn al-Kalbī, he states: *Qāla Ibn al-Kalbī fī mawḍi^cin aḥar: Aḥbaranī abī...*⁸ – “Ibn al-Kalbī said in a different place: My father informed me...” followed by a statement on Hišām's father – Muḥammad ibn al-Kalbī is given as the source.

As was mentioned above, one of the undisclosed commentators is relatively easy to identify. His remarks concern Slavs in Sicily: *wa-bi-Šiqilliyya ayḍan mawḍi^c yuqāl la-hu Šaqḷab wa-yuqāl la-hu ayḍan ḥārat aš-Šaqālība bi-hā ^cuyūn ġāriya*⁹ – “And on Sicily there is also a place which is called *Šaqḷab* and it is also called the quarter of the Slavs, there are running streams of water there”. It is very likely that the above information comes from Ibn Ḥawqal's *Šūrat al-Arḍ*, from a chapter dealing with *Šiqilliyya*. When the geographer and traveller mentions the city of Palermo and its different quarters he states: *...wa-ḥāra tu^craf bi-ḥārat aš-Šaqālība (...)* *bi-hā ^cuyūn ġāriya*¹⁰ – “...and the quarter known as

⁵ Abū ^cAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ziyād commonly known as Ibn al-A^crābī.

⁶ *Jacut's geographisches Wörterbuch*, v. III, p. 405.

⁷ Al-Mas^cūdī, *Murūğ aḍ-Ḍahab = Les praires d'or*, (ed.) Barbier ds Meynard, Paris 1864, v. III, p. 61–64.

⁸ *Jacut's geographisches Wörterbuch*, v. III, p. 405.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Šūrat al-Arḍ*, (ed.) J.H. Kramers, Leiden 1938, v. I. p. 119.

the quarter of Slaves (...) there are running streams of water there". Ibn Ḥawqal also adds that the quarter is the most densely inhabited area in the city. The information about Slavs in al-Andalus included in this entry might also have been taken from Ibn Ḥawqal, who in describing this region mentions Ṣaqlab/Ṣaqlāliba living there¹¹. However, Yāqūt specifies that the Slavs live in the area of Šantarīn,¹² where the lands are very fertile – *wa-Ṣaqlab aydan bi-l-Anadalu min aʿmāl Šantarīn wa-arḍu-hā arḍ zakīyya*.¹³

The only one anonymous statement is introduced by Yāqūt as follows: *wa-qāla ġayru-hu*. The note describes the geographical position of the lands of the Slavs – *aṣ-Ṣaqlāliba bilād bayna Bulġār wa-l-Quṣṭanīniyya* and it is completed with a grammatical remark – *wāḥidu-hum ṣaqlabiyy*¹⁴ – “a singular form is a Slav (*ṣaqlabiyy*)”. This observation, like the rest of the information this entry is placed alongside, might have been taken from a lexicographical dictionary.

The entry on the Slavs can be summed up as follows: although it is not very long at least eight sources were used, mostly philologists and lexicographers living and working at least two hundred years before Yāqūt. He seems have made the effort to inform his readers about the appearance of the Slavs; to show the difference between them and the Arabs. He also seems to have been aware of differences among the Slavs or people whom the sources considered to be Slavs. The important statement cited by Yāqūt proves that some medieval writers were aware of the confusion in referring to certain people as Slavs only on the basis of their appearance – *wa-qīla li-r-raġul al-aḥmar Ṣiqlāb bi-tašbīhi-hi bi-alwān aṣ-Ṣaqlāliba*¹⁵ – “the man with red complexion is called Ṣiqlāb due to the similarity of his complexion to that of aṣ-Ṣaqlāliba”. In other entries he made use of the accounts of Ibn al-Faḡīh or al-Iṣṭaḥrī whose information about the Slavs may have enriched the knowledge presented here.

One important issue ought to be stressed: in this entry Yāqūt seems not to have confused the Slavs in terms of their origin with other peoples who had close political, trade and geographical contacts with the Slavs and who in Arab sources were identified as Slavs. However, in other entries, for example Bulġār, while he quotes another source he calls the Bulġār's king a King of the Slavs, which may suggest the Bulġār's were considered to be Slavs. The entry is a short one but a relatively large number of sources were used to compile this information. The article of the entry does not follow the layout of the “ideal entry” but it is nevertheless close to the ideal.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 110, 113.

¹² Šantarīn – Santarém – a town in Portugal located in a fertile area, also known in Arabic sources under the name of al-Balāṭa of Latin origin.

¹³ *Jacut's geographisches Wörterbuch*, v. III, p. 405.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

Four entries which include the term “Slavs” contain sizeable fragments of Ibn Faḍlān’s well-known account of an Arab legation to, as the author describes him, the King of aṣ-Ṣaqāliba. It is common knowledge that Ibn Faḍlān’s testimony had only been known in Europe via Yāqūt’s *Dictionary* before Z. V. Togan found a more complete manuscript in the 1920s. Ibn Faḍlān’s report has been carefully studied and translated into many languages because it is the most important and comprehensive medieval Arabic source of information on Eastern Europe. Hence, this paper does not discuss that famous account because Yāqūt’s remarks which precede or follow Ibn Faḍlān’s *Risāla* are much more interesting.

The Bulḡār entry:

The name is used in Arabic sources to denote those Turkic people who founded a state at the confluence of the Kama and Volga rivers in the Middle Ages. The word Bulḡār was applied both to the country and to the capital city.

The layout of the material in the Bulḡār entry is far from being “the ideal entry” described at the beginning of this paper. In Yāqūt’s *Dictionary* the entry Bulḡār is truly comprehensive, although Ibn Faḍlān’s famous account makes up 90% of it. In the case of the present research the most interesting section is the part which precedes Ibn Faḍlān’s *Risāla*, though Yāqūt does not reveal his sources here. He begins with a description typical of the first philological part of “the ideal entry” – how to pronounce the word properly. Then, without referring to any source, he states that “this is a city of the Slavs” – *madīnat aṣ-Ṣaqāliba*¹⁶ which is located in the North in a very cold area. The reference to the fact that Bulḡār is also a city helps determine the time of Yāqūt’s source. It must have come into being not earlier than at the end of the 10th century because the testimonies which had been written before that time, such as Ibn Rustah’s or Ibn Faḍlān’s, do not mention any towns in Bulḡār. Al-Iṣṭaḥrī is the first geographer to write about two towns – Bulḡār and Suwār in that country. The information about the geographical position, the low temperatures in Bulḡār and the fact that it is a city of the Slavs is then repeated word for word by later lexicographers such as al-Fīrūzābādī in his *Al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*¹⁷ and az-Zabīdī in *Tāğ al-ʿarūs*.¹⁸ Then Yāqūt, still not revealing his sources, adds that the snow does not disappear either the winter or the summer so that people rarely see the bare soil without snow. This statement is followed by information about the construction of houses, which are built of wood – one log over another and then the logs are fixed with special wooden pegs.¹⁹

¹⁶ Jacut’s *geographisches Wörterbuch*, v. I, p. 722.

¹⁷ Al-Fīrūzābādī, *Al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*, Būlāq 1303 h, v. I, p. 374.

¹⁸ Az-Zabīdī, *Tāğ al-ʿarūs*, Kuwayt 1972, v. X, p. 250.

¹⁹ Jacut’s *geographisches Wörterbuch*, v. I, p. 723.

Besides Ibn Faḍlān's description and Ibn Rustah, the most important sources on Bulġār which might have been used by Yāqūt, are al-Iṣṭahṛī, the unknown author of *Ḥudūd al-Ālam* and Ibn Ḥawqal. These accounts all date from the 10th century. Al-Iṣṭahṛī and the other writers after him mention wooden houses in Bulġār but, according to my knowledge, none of them described so precisely the method of their construction in that country. This remark might have been taken from an oral source or, which is more likely, from an unknown written account.

At the end of these preliminary remarks preceding Ibn Faḍlān's long account, typical information in the form of *al-masālik wa-l-mamālik* is provided, describing the distance to Itil, the capital city of the Ḥazar, as well as to Bašġird and Kuyāba. It is very probable that Yāqūt used al-Iṣṭahṛī's *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik* as his source, as he quotes word for word statements from this work.²⁰

Ibn Faḍlān's account of Bulġār is prefaced with some remarks concerning al-Muqtadir's legation to the King of Bulġār, together with the reasons for this mission and the circumstances of his and his subjects' conversion to Islam. It is very likely that this is Yāqūt's own supplementary comment as a historical introduction to Ibn Faḍlān's testimony. In this part the author of *Muġam al-Buldān* also refers to the King of Bulġār as the King of aṣ-Ṣaqāliba.

The entry Rūs:

The name Rūs in early Arabic sources usually refers to the Scandinavians, but it is worthwhile recalling P. B. Golden's conclusion in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*:

Given the complexities of their conjectured origins, it may, nonetheless, not be amiss to view the Rūs at this stage of their development, as they began to penetrate Eastern Europe, not as an ethnos, in the strict sense of the term, for this could shift as new ethnic elements were added, but rather as a commercial and political organisation. The term was certainly associated with maritime and riverine traders and merchant mercenaries/ pirates of "Ṣaqāliba" stock (Northern and Eastern European, Scandinavian, Slavic and Finnic).²¹

As in the case of the entry on Bulġār, Ibn Faḍlān's account makes up 90% of this section. However, the opening remarks and one very short note at the end of the whole article do not come from this source.

²⁰ Al-Iṣṭahṛī, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik*, ed. M.J. de Goje, BGA, Lugduni Batavorum 1927, v. I, p. 227.

²¹ Golden, P.B., "Rūs", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Leiden 1995, v. VIII, p. 621. The controversy surrounding the origin of the Rūs, not only that which emerges from the Arabic sources, is briefly and clearly presented by O. Pritsak, whose conclusion bears out P. B. Golden's opinion (cf. Pritsak, O., "The Origin of Rus", *Russian Review*, vol. XXXVI, (1977), p. 247–273).

The entry begins with the rules on how to read and write the term correctly and informs the reader that the alternative form is Rus (without ū). Then Yāqūt describes who the Rūs are, introducing them by their geographical location: *umma min al-umam, bilādu-hum mutāḥīma li-ṣ-Ṣaḡāliba wa-t-Turk*²² – “one of the nations whose country borders with the Slavs and Turks”. Early Arab geographers often pointed out the fact that the lands of the Rūs lie next to those of the Slavs and the Bulgār, e.g. al-Iṣṭahrī. He describes the geographical position of the different nations and places the lands of the Rūs between these two peoples.²³ Although Yāqūt’s exact source has not been identified, the statement he uses in his *Dictionary* can be found in a number of later lexicographical texts. It is repeated word for word in the unfinished *Al-‘Ubāb az-Zāḥir wa-l-Lubāb al-Fāḥir*,²⁴ which was compiled by Yāqūt’s contemporary, the famous lexicographer al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad aṣ-Ṣaḡānī. Aṣ-Ṣaḡānī (d. 1252) spent most of his life in India, but visited Baghdad in 1226–1227 while Yāqūt was working on his *opus magnum*. He returned to Baghdad again approximately ten years after Yāqūt’s death. On this occasion he composed his *Al-‘Ubāb*. During his sojourn in Baghdad he might have had access to *Muġam* but the more likely scenario is that both scholars used the same work as a source of knowledge on the Rūs. Similar information appears later under the entry rās (r.w.s) in al-Fīrūzābādī’s *Al-Qāmūs: wa Rūs bi-ḍamm, ṭāi’fa, bilādu-hum mutāḥīma li-ṣ-Ṣaḡāliba wa-t-Turk*²⁵ – “The Rūs, pronounced with a “ū”, people, their lands border those of the Slavs and the Turks”.

The next thing that Yāqūt informs the reader without revealing his sources is a very concise description of the customs of the Rūs. Yāqūt explains that they have their own language, religion and law which only they recognise. This statement may be treated as an introduction to the testimony from the next source al-Muṭaḥhar ibn Ṭāḥir al-Maḡdisī. He is a little known author of a historical encyclopedia written in the 10th century called *Kitāb al-Bad’ wa-t-Ta’rīḥ*. Yāqūt introduces him only as al-Maḡdisī, which can be confusing because this name could be read as al-Muḡaddasī, the geographer whose work, *Aḥsan at-Taḡāsīm fī-Ma’rifat al-Aḡālīm*, was referred to extensively by the author of *Muġam*. However, al-Muḡaddasī only briefly mentions the Rūs. Using al-Maḡdisī as an authority Yāqūt freely cites his remarks regarding the abode of ar-Rūs on an island in a lake that protects them from their neighbours. He estimates the number of the island’s inhabitants at a hundred thousand and adds that they do not have any cultivated lands and do not engage in stock farming. Quoting

²² Jacut’s *geographisches Wörterbuch*, v. II, p. 834.

²³ Al-Iṣṭahrī, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

²⁴ Aṣ-Ṣaḡānī, *Al-‘Ubāb az-Zāḥir wa-l-Lubāb al-Fāḥir*, Islāmābād 1994, v. IV, p. 207.

²⁵ Al-Fīrūzābādī, *Al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, Miṣr, Maṭba‘at as-Sa‘āda, without date of edition, v. II, p. 220. This statement is missing from the previously used Būlāq edition.

the same source Yāqūt then describes the Rūs' relations with their neighbours in a rather astonishing way: *wa-š-Šaqāliba yuğīrūn 'alay-him wa ya'ħudūn amwāla-hum*²⁶ – “The Slavs invade them and take their goods”. This statement is an obvious mistake, because all sources, and not only Arabic ones, claim that it was the Rūs themselves who had been invading the Slavs. Yāqūt's direct source – al-Maqdisī – describes the fact as follows: *yutāħim baladu-hum balad aš-Šaqāliba fa-yuğīrūn 'alay-him wa-ya'kulūn amwāla-hum wa-yasbūna-hum*²⁷ – “The Slavs border with them, and they (the Rūs) invade them, steal their goods and take them prisoners”. In addition to al-Maqdisī's alleged source²⁸ – Ibn Rustah writes of the Rūs raiding the Slavs, taking them prisoners and selling them to the Ĥazars and the Bulğars.²⁹

This remark is followed, still using al-Maqdisī as an authority, by information about the sword which is given to each new born boy, about its role in a warrior's life and a description of how the King of the Rūs settles disputes between enemies. Yāqūt's introductory part preceding Ibn Faḍlān's account finishes with a laconic statement concerning a Rūs raid on Barḍa'a, they succeeded in conquer the city but it was recaptured soon after. The event is mentioned by many Arab sources, here. Although Yāqūt does not state it explicitly, he continues to use al-Maqdisī's text as his authority. All these remarks mentioned above are followed by Ibn Faḍlān's comprehensive account.

Ibn Faḍlān's account begins with a very important remark which was often highlighted: Yāqūt informs the reader that he read Ibn Faḍlān's book in which the latter relates his experiences from the very moment he set out from Baghdad until the moment he returned to the city. It is commonly known that Ibn Faḍlān's commentary ends with his opening remarks on the Ĥazars. Neither Yāqūt nor the manuscript found by Z.V. Togan nor any other text preserves the description of the return journey.

Only the final two sentences are added by the author of *The Dictionary* at the end of the entry: the first, in which he expresses his hopes regarding the credibility and integrity of the quoted account, and the second, in which he informs the reader that in his time the Rūs are Christians. He does not identify any source of information, but what is likely is this kind of knowledge was common among members of the intellectual elite of the caliphate.

²⁶ Jacut's *geographisches Wörterbuch*, v. II, p. 834.

²⁷ Al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-Bad' wa-t-Ta'rīḥ* (ed.) C. Huart, Paris 1907, v. IV. p. 66.

²⁸ Al-Maqdisī omits certain passages found in Ibn Rustah, especially those concerning trade and funeral rituals, hence it may also be probable that they have a common source, such as al-Ġayhānī's work which has not survived until the present day.

²⁹ Ibn Rustah, *Kitāb al-A'lāq an-Nafīsa*, (ed.) M.J. de Goje, BGA, Lugduni Batavorum 1892, p. 145.

The entry Kūtāba:

In all the editions used this name is incorrectly given as Kūtāba, though in other places in *The Dictionary*, for example the Bulgār entry, it is written correctly. It should clearly have been amended to Kūyāba. Almost the entire material in this entry consists of a quotation from al-Iṣṭāḥrī. This even includes the introductory sentence, although here, at the very beginning, this geographer is not identified as a source: *Kūtāba/Kūyāba – madīna bi-r-Rūs qālū hiya akbar min Bulgār*³⁰ – “a town in ar-Rūs, it is said to be bigger than Bulgār”.

And later, citing al-Iṣṭāḥrī as an authority, Yāqūt states that there are three groups of ar-Rūs: the first whose domicile is close to Bulgār and whose king resides in Kūtāba/Kūyāba, a northern group called aṣ-Ṣalāwiyya, and a third group mistakenly named al-Arbāwiyya, which should be amended to al-Artāwiyya. Their king’s residence is in Arbā, which should be corrected as Artā. While aṣ-Ṣalāwiyya is usually identified as the Slovens of the Novgorod area³¹ the question of al-Artāwiyya and Artā is still disputed. Then Yāqūt, still on al-Iṣṭāḥrī’s authority, provides some information on the trade with Kūyāba and Artā. The above-mentioned remarks are quoted word for word from *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik*.³²

The entry Itil:

The article under the heading Itil consists of five sections and it is another entry where Ibn Faḍlān’s *Risāla* is extensively quoted. It concerns the Volga River. The article opens with a typical philological part, which constitutes the first section, in which Yāqūt describes precisely how to pronounce the term and stresses the pronunciation Itil *bi-kasr* not Atil. The next section informs the reader what the Itil is and lists the countries through which it flows. To visualize its size Yāqūt compares the Itil to the River Tigris (Diğla). The above accounts, which include facts for the most part already known to the intellectual elite of the author’s contemporaries, are given without revealing any sources. However, they form a kind of preface to the next and longest section of the entry – an extensive quote from Ibn Faḍlān’s *Risāla*. What is especially valuable here is that the quote ends with Yāqūt’s personal remarks regarding the popularity that Ibn Faḍlān’s report enjoys among the educated population of the caliphate. The above citation is followed by two sections which sum up the content of the article as a whole and they are in some way complementary and both are anonymous regarding their sources. The first starts with what may be described as Yāqūt’s personal view: *fa-inna nahr Itil, lā šakk fī ʿizami-hi wa-ṭūli-hi*³³ – “The Volga River, **without doubt**, is grand and long” and then he again lists the countries (ar-Rūs, Bulgār, Ḥazar) through

³⁰ Jacut’s *geographisches Wörterbuch*, v. IV, p. 318.

³¹ Thulin, A., “The third tribe of Rus”, *Slavia Antiqua*, (1978), XXV, p. 99.

³² Al-Iṣṭāḥrī, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

³³ Jacut’s *geographisches Wörterbuch*, v. I, p. 113.

which it passes, but here he also states that it flows into the Buḥayra Ğurġān. The Caspian Sea is generally referred to as Baḥr al-Ḥazar, but some Arabic sources use the name Baḥr Ğurġān, which contains references to the lands or provinces on its shores.³⁴ Continuing with this passage Yāqūt discusses the river's role in trade and specifies certain goods which were conveyed along the River Volga, such as sable and squirrel fur as well as beaver hides. As is mentioned above, the source of this description is undisclosed, but many Arab geographers and travelers (e.g. Ibn Rustah, Ibn Faḍlān, Al-Iṣṭaḥrī) describe trade on the Volga and the goods imported via it. However, this information might have been added based on the authority and the knowledge he had gained while trading, though his own routes did not cross the Volga. However, what should be stressed here is that for the most part he gives the exact quotations from the material he used. Whatever the case, the source of this data must remain unidentified.

In the fifth and final section, which as we have already mentioned is anonymous, Yāqūt once again enumerates the regions through which the river flows, including Ḥirḥīz, al-Kimākiyya, al-Ġuziyya and other places. He finishes with a description of the vast volume of the Volga waters and their colour, which differs from the colour of the sea. This last passage is a literal quotation of the chapter in which the Ḥazar Sea is discussed in al-Iṣṭaḥrī's work.³⁵

The entry Bāšġird:

The content of the entry is among the last listed at the beginning of the paper category. Yāqūt's *Dictionary* includes a few entries which meet these criteria, but the entry Bāšġird is the most absorbing. Its content can be divided into two parts regarding the area or better areas involved and its value lies in the 'iyān – Yāqūt's personal remarks based on his own observations and experiences.

Arab geographers use the name Bāšġirds to refer to two groups of people. The first, often call the "inner Bāšġirds" (*ad-dāḥil*), is a Turkic people who lived in the Urals and bordered Bulġār. The second group, the so-called "outer Bāšġirds", refers to the Magyars.³⁶ Yāqūt does not clearly distinguish between them. He seems to be confused and describes them both in one entry. At first, he carefully explains how to pronounce the name and gives the alternative forms: Bāšġird and Bāšqird along with Bāšġird. Then he informs the reader about the geographical position of their lands: *bilād bayna al-Qusṭanṭīniyya wa-Bulġār*³⁷ – "between Byzantium

³⁴ The name used here by Yāqūt Buḥayra (lake) is slightly confusing, the term Buḥayra Ğurġāniyya (not Buḥayrat Ğurġān) referred to the Aral Sea (c.f. G. Le Strange, *The Lands of Eastern Caliphate*, Cambridge 2011, p. 458).

³⁵ A-Iṣṭaḥrī, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

³⁶ Cf. *Ḥudūd al-Ālām, The Regions of the World*, (trans. & ed.) V. Minorsky, Oxford 1937, p. 318–320; Lewicki, T., „Węgrzy i muzułmanie węgierscy w świetle relacji podróżnika arabskiego z XII wieku Abū Ḥamid al-Andalusī al-Garnaṭī'ego”, *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* XIII (1937), p. 107.

³⁷ *Jacut's geographisches Wörterbuch*, v. I, p. 468.

and Bulġār”. Determining the source of this brief fragment is difficult, but it is rather doubtful that he relied on his favourite geographer on Eastern Europe, i.e. al-Iṣṭahṛī, who calls these people Baṣġirt and writes specifically about two different groups of them, though he mentions that one of this group borders with ar-Rūm.³⁸ The entry also contains a part of Ibn Faḍlān’s *Risāla*. The quotation from it is preceded with a kind of a historical preface where the reasons for the legation are given and the names of two of its members are revealed. The King of Bulġār is described as the King of aṣ-Ṣaqāliba. The relevant passage from Ibn Faḍlān’s deals, of course, with the Bāṣġirds neighbouring the Bulġār, through whose country the mission with Ibn Faḍlān passed.

Next Yāqūt enriches Ibn Faḍlān’s account with his own experience. He states that in Ḥalab (Aleppo) he met a group of Bāṣġirds. He calls them al-Bāṣġirdiyya. He describes them in a way that is similar to the Slavs, emphasizing the fair colour of their hair and their pale complexion *ṣuqr aṣ-ṣuʿūr wa-l-wuġūh*.³⁹ They had arrived in the city to study Islamic law (*fiqh*). As a genuine learned man seeking knowledge and taking advantage of a reliable source he asks them to tell him about their country. They describe their country as belonging to *mamlakat umma min al-Ifranġ*⁴⁰ – “to the Kingdom of the Franks”, but not in a political but rather in a cultural sense, and they added that it is called al-Hunkar. They describe their country, mentioning the fact that there are approximately thirty villages, that they are surrounded by the Christians and list the lands bordering them, among others the lands of the Slavs: *fa-ṣamāliyyunā bilād aṣ-Ṣaqāliba*⁴¹ – “the Slavs are in the North”. The account includes some details on war customs, the origin of Islam in the country and a description of the life of Muslims and similar remarks. Finally, the Bāṣġirds met by Yāqūt in Aleppo were asked to assess the distance between al-Hunkar and Ḥalab, which they estimated to be journey of about five months – *min hāhunā ilā al-Qunṣṭanṭīniyya naḥwa šahrayn wa-niṣf wa-min al-Qunṣṭanṭīniyya ilā bilādinā naḥwa ḍālīka*.⁴² This figure appears to have been unclear to Yāqūt. On this occasion he reveals his sources, citing al-Iṣṭahṛī’s own numbers given in his work, and declares: “From Baṣġird to Bulġār is a journey of twenty five days, and from Bāṣġird to al-Baġanāk (the Pechenges) ten days”.⁴³ The quotation from al-Iṣṭahṛī seems to have been added as supplementary information, but may be also treated as proof that Yāqūt had in this case confused different regions belonging to the Bāṣġids and Hunkar.

³⁸ Al-Iṣṭahṛī, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

³⁹ *Jacut’s geographisches Wörterbuch*, v. I, p. 469.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² *Ibidem*, v. I, p. 470.

⁴³ *Jacut’s geographisches Wörterbuch*, v. I, p. 470. In al-Iṣṭahṛī’s *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik* the different distances connected with the Baḥr al-Ḥazar are gathered together in the end of the passage concerned the Caspian Sea (Baḥr al-Ḥazar) (cf. al-Iṣṭahṛī, *op. cit.*, p. 227).

The entry Baħr Buntus:

The entry is very short, consists of five verses in Wüstenfeld's edition of the *Dictionary* and concerns the Black Sea, which was known by Arab writers under different appellations, sometimes involving the names of adjacent peoples, provinces or cities. The entry begins with the typical philological part, but what is rather unusual here is that Yāqūt discloses his sources of information when he states: *Baħr Buntus kaḏā wağadtu-hu bi-ħaṭṭ Abī ar-Rayħān*⁴⁴ – “Baħr Buntus (The Black Sea), in this way I found that name written in Abū ar-Rayħān's writings”. This Abū ar-Rayħān should be identified as Abū ar-Rayħān Muħammad ibn Aħmad al-Bīrūnī, one of the greatest learned man of medieval Islam and one of those scholars whose works had a great impact on Yāqūt, which he demonstrated indirectly by including al-Bīrūnī's biography in his *Iršād*, known in English as the *Dictionary of Learned Men*. The next part of the entry – the geographical section, which also concludes the whole article, also uses al-Bīrūnī as an authority. Yāqūt describes the geographical location of the Sea and lists the adjacent lands, including *arḏ aš-Şaqāliba* – the land of the Slavs. Here it is mentioned that the name Buntus is of Greek origin and among the Arabs the Sea is known as Baħr Ʀarābazunda, whose name is derived from the port located on the Silk Road – Trebizond.

The above entry is one of a number of articles which barely touch upon the problem of the Slavs in Yāqūt's *Dictionary*. There are a few more similar references to these issues, but they do not contribute anything of value to the Arabs' knowledge about the Slavs. Yāqūt passes over in silence certain phenomena connected with these people, such as cities, regions, tribes, and peoples which were in his time familiar to Arab geographers and travelers. For example, he does not seem to have recognized the Burğāns – a group of Bulğārs who in the 7th century founded a state among the Slavonic tribes, and in his time had been largely absorbed by the latter and mentions the Burğāns as a group neighbouring the Ĥazars. Although he creates an entry termed “Burğar”⁴⁵ and, citing al-Masʿūdī,⁴⁶ explains that it is a city lying on the Baħr Māniṯas coast and belonging to the Turkic people. In all the editions a corrupted name of the sea is given, i.e. Baħr Māniṯas instead of Baħr Māyūṯis (the Azov Sea). Yāqūt adds here his own commentary to al-Masʿūdī's testimony and recognizes the inhabitants as belonging to the Bulğārs, but he does not include the Slavs or the King of Slavs in this remark.

To conclude, most of Yāqūt's sources (those that are anonymous of course) that he used to compose *The Dictionary* are relatively easy to identify. Only a few comments remain unidentified. They could be taken over from works,

⁴⁴ *Jacut's geographisches Wörterbuch*, v. I, p. 499.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, v. I, p. 568.

⁴⁶ Yāqūt quotes word for word al-Masʿūdī's *Murūğ* (cf. al. Masʿūdī, *op. cit.*, v. II, p. 15–16).

oral testimonies or more complete manuscripts which are unknown today but which Yāqūt might have possessed.

None of the entries dealing with the Slavs follows the layout of “the ideal entry” described at the beginning of the paper. The author of *Muġam al-Buldān* does not always disclose his sources and he does not pay much attention to current issues concerning the Slavic peoples which had come to light shortly before he composed his work. To describe the lands of the Slavs he makes use of some sources from the 9th century, but mostly from the 10th. Hence, the information provided is, in a sense, out of date and he is aware of this fact. Therefore, in some rare cases he completes the text by providing more up-to-date information with himself as the source. However, it should be stressed that, first of all, he uses accounts from well-known geographical works based mostly on oral testimonies or on their authors’ own experiences to provide his readers with knowledge about the Slavs. The extensive use of Ibn Faḍlān’s *Risāla* as an authority who had written his work based on his own experiences proves this. The second important source of information appears to have been al-Iṣṭaḥrī, although sometimes the quotation from his work is included as anonymous. As his secondary sources he makes use of a number of lexicographical works and includes the opinions of renowned Arab philologists.

On the other hand, he does not know Ibrāhīm ibn Yaʿqūb’s account of his travels to Western and Central Europe, which in 11th century al-Bakrī partly included in his work *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik*. He seems not to be interested in more contemporary texts which deal with issues affecting of peoples outside Dār al-Islām, such as those of Abū Ḥamīd al-Ġarnaṭī or al-Idrīsī. This is, in a sense, a symptom of the time. The 13th century was a period when former achievements were being recapitulated. Writers and scientists were focusing mostly on internal matters rather than problems in remote places. Yāqūt is generally a reliable scholar but a child of his time as well.

It is a little surprising that, apart from Ibn Faḍlān’s *Risāla*, he barely informs his readers about trade with the Slavs and people who were considered to be Slavs in Arabic works. The goods and the routes, both by land and river, are comprehensively described in texts that Yāqūt used to compile his material on the Slavs and related peoples, whereas in other entries, devoted to areas not associated with the Slavs, he pays particular attention to trade items and routes, revealing in this way his former profession.

His work covering the information outlined above was intended to broaden readers’ minds and to entertain them. He created a literary *adab* text with a typical *adab* structure, a dictionary with a compilatory content but an innovative shape.