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THE ROLE OF TRADE IN THE CONVERSION TO ISLAM
AND IN THE HISTORY OF THE VOLGA BULGHARS

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Abstract: *The trade-network of Afro-Eurasia changed radically in the 9th–10th centuries, instead of the former east-west routes the south-north came to the fore. The Volga-Kama region became the most important port of trade between the Islamic world and Eastern Europe in the beginning of the 10th century which set in motion the formation of the Volga Bulghar state and the conversion to Islam. The Volga Bulgars are mentioned in the Muslim sources as the center of trade. Ibn Faḍlān, al-Masʿūdī give a detailed picture of this intensive trade. The Muslim dirhams came from Samanid mints to the Volga region and the Volga Bulghar merchants bought northern merchandise (furs, slaves, wax, honey etc.) in the 10th century. Al-Muqaddasī gives an exhaustive list of trade goods from the Volga Bulgar area at the end of the 10th century. After the disappearance of the silver dirhams in the first decades of the 11th century the state of the Volga Bulgars remained a significant trade center. The Muslim maps of Ibn Ḥawqal, Maḥmūd al-Kāshgarī and al-Idrīsī reflect a river system called Etil which is waterway commercial network. It connects Central Asia via Siberia with the Volga-Kama region, the northern regions can be reached on the way along the Kama and perhaps the Vyatka, the northeastern network includes the Oka, Unzha and upper Volga. The southern routes represent the lower Volga from the territory of Volga Bulgars to the Caspian Sea and the Volga-Don portage plus the lower Don until its estuary to the Azov Sea.*

Keywords: *the Volga Bulgars, Islam, trade, islamic maps.*

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The spread of Islam was the consequence of the grand scale conquests of the Arabs in the age of Orthodox Caliphs and later under the Umayyads extending to China in the East and Andalusia in the West in the 7th–8th centuries [Kennedy, 2007]. The new wave of Islamization directed toward the peoples of Central Asia, Eastern Europe and India [Golden, 1990, p. 343–370]. New states were formed in Eastern Europe in the 10th century and three world-religions competed to convert these states to their own religion. The Khazars adopted Judaism earlier [Golden, 2007, p. 123–162], but Islam and Christianity became involved in religious conversions. The Volga Bulgars embraced Islam in the beginning of the 10th century [Zimonyi, 1994, p. 235–240; Mako, 2011, p. 199–223; Izmailov, 2016, p. 68–92], whereas the Kievan Rus converted to Christianity from Constantinople by the end of the 10th century [Franklin, Shepard, 1996, p. 151–169].

The long-distance trade played an important role in nomadic empire-building and in the adoption of a world religion by the steppe peoples. In Eastern Europe the Jewish merchants had basic influence in the Khazar court and they must have influenced the adoption of the Mosaic faith among the Khazars.

Similarly, the Rus centre moved from the north to Kiev in the 10th century which lies on the trade route connecting Byzantium with Scandinavia and its result was the adaptation of Christianity from Constantinople.

There was a turning point in the 9th–10th centuries in the history of trade-network of Afro-Eurasia. The former two hubs of the Silk Road (2nd c. BC – 2nd c. AD and 6th c. – 8th c.) connected the East with the West, whereas the 9th–10th centuries the characteristic trade-routes directed from South to North [Christian, 2000, p. 18–20; Vassière, 2014, p. 102–106]. The change of the trade routes brought Eastern Europe to completely new situation. The Khazar Kaghannate became a commercial empire in the 9th century and two other new state-formations appeared in the 10th century: the Kievan Rus and Volga Bulgharia partly due to this prosperous trade. The two strategic trade routes: the Volga and caravan route from Khwarazm via Kazak steppe to the Volga-Kama estuary met in Volga Bulgharia [Noonan, 1985, p. 179–204].

After the Ommayad-Khazar wars in the first half of the 8th century, the Abbasids established trade relations with the Khazars, because of which was a flourishing trade through the Caucasus and along the Volga starting from c. 800. The Khazar Kaghannate became a commercial empire and played an intermediary role in trade between the Islamic world and north-eastern Europe and Scandinavia. The furs, slaves, honey, wax, and amber came from the North and the Muslim merchants paid for them silver dirhams [Kovalev, 2011, p. 43–155].

The dirham-hoards in Western Eurasia between c. 700 and c. 1100 were catalogized by Noonan and Kovalev. More than 80% of the 1656 dirham-hoards including almost half a million (486,956) dirhams of Afro-Eurasia were found in north-eastern Europe. During the first phase, i.e. the 9th century 20% of the dirhams arrived Eastern Europe via the Caucasus – the Volga-Don waterways from the mints of central Islamic lands. 80% of the dirhams can be dated to the 10th century and they were stuck in the territory of the Samanids [Kovalev, Kaelin, 2007, p. 1–21]. The first silver crises appeared at the end of the 9th century. The Pecheneg westward migration brought a turning point in the history of Eastern Europe in the 890s. The great power position of the Khazars was shattered due to the loss of the territory west of Don, and at the same time the trade route along the lower Volga was temporarily closed. By 914, these coins could be supplied from the Samanid Empire via the southern coast of the Caspian Sea to the Volga route. However, the Samanids lost their Caspian provinces in 914, so then the main trade route to Eastern Europe passed through Khwarazm and the present Kazak steppe to the Volga-Kama region which Ibn Faḍlān followed during his journey to the king of the Volga Bulgars. The Volga-Kama region became the strategic center of trade route network connecting Eastern Europe with Transoxania. The Samanids facilitated the conversion of the Volga Bulgars not only with the aim of securing their trade relations with Eastern Europe but from political motivation [Noonan, 2000, p. 140–218].

The land of the Volga Bulgars was a trade center between the Islamic world and Eastern Europe in the 10th–13th centuries [Valeev, 2011].

I quote some of the Muslim sources concerning the significance of this trade. Ibn Faḍlān travelled to the Bulgars on the main caravan route from Khwarazm through the steppes to the Volga-Kama. In the territory of the Oghuz he reported: “On the following day, we met a Turk. He was an ugly man, wretched looking, small and stunted in appearance, really ignoble. We had just been caught by a violent cloudburst. ‘Stop!’ he cried. The whole caravan halted. It was made up of some 3,000 horses and 5,000 men” [Montgomery, 2014, p. 206–207; Lunde, Stone, 2011, p. 17]. It shows the volume of trade on land route. There were an influential commercial group among the Volga Bulgars as Ibn Faḍlān noted: “There are many merchants among them who go to the lands of the Turks and bring back sheep, and to a land called Wisu, from which they bring the skins of sable and black foxes” [Montgomery, 2014, p. 232–233; Lunde, Stone, 2011, p. 39].

Al-Mas'ūdī twenty year after Ibn Faḍlān's journey remarked on this commercial route: "Caravans continually pass back and forth between the Bulghars and Khwarazm, which is a dependency of the kingdom of Khurasan. Because the route passes through the encampments of other Turkish nomads, they are constrained to place themselves under their protection" [Lunde, Stone, 2011, p. 137; Minorsky, 1958, p. 149; al-Mas'ūdī, vol. II, p. 216].

As for the variety of the commercial goods al-Muqaddasī noted: "From Khwarazm: sable [sammur] grey squirrel [sinjāb] ermine [*qāqūn] mink [fanak] fox marten [dallah] beaver [*khazbūst] spotted hare [-kharkūsh] goatskins [*bāzbūst] wax arrows birch wood [tūz] tall fur caps [qalānīs] isinglas [gharā samak, fish glue] fish teeth [probably walrus and narwhal tusks] castoreum oil ["khazmīyān] amber tanned horse hides [*kīmākt] honey hazelnuts falcons [ayuz] swords armour maple wood [? khalanj] Saqalib slaves sheep cattle. All these come from Bulghar, and they also bring grapes and much oil" [Muqaddasī, BGA III, p. 324–325; Lunde, Stone, 2011, p. 169–170].

To demonstrate the importance of trade I reconstructed a network of river-system called Etil in the Muslim maps of Ibn Ḥawqal, al-Kāshgharī and al-Idrīsī. Its center is the territory of the Volga Bulghars and it connected Central Asia, Siberia, North-Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, eastern part of the Islamic world and Byzantium. This network was complemented by land routes. The Volga Bulghar territory was really a strategic point in this trade network where the Volga, Kama and Belaya joined together.

The Arabic versions of the name are *Atil* and *Athil*. It reflects the Turkic *Etil* ~ *Ätil* which appears as 'black *Etil*' in early Byzantine source corresponding the usage of the Chagatay, Kazan Tatar, Bashkir and Chuvash composition meaning the river Volga. The 'white *Etil*' means the rivers of the lower Kama and Belaja in Bashkir, Tatar and Chuvash. In addition, there is another opposition in Tatar: big *Idil* 'Volga' and small *Idil* 'Kama-Belaya'. The *Etil* river network was clearly described among the languages the Turkic peoples: the Volga from the confluence of the Volga and Kama downward was called *Etil*, upward from there toward northwest, the Volga was known as 'black or large *Etil*', however the north-eastern branch, the river Kama-Belaya was designated as 'white or small *Etil*' [Podosinov, 1999, p. 46; Ligeti, 1986, p. 479; Zimonyi, 2020, p. 363–373].

As a starting point, the data from the Balkhī-tradition are taken into consideration. Al-Balkhī and his followers, al-Iṣṭakhṛī and Ibn Ḥawqal made commentary to the maps. Kalinina studied the hydronyms of the Volga in this tradition and other contemporary Muslim sources [Dzhakson et al., 2007, p. 135–157]. I cut the relevant parts of the world map of Ibn Ḥawqal (fig. 1)¹

In the center of the fragment is a circle, which is the Caspian Sea. The Etil flows into it. The Lower Etil (the Volga) is a border between the Khazars and Oghuz, then it is divided into three branches. The eastern branch starts from the western edge of the Kirghiz and Kharkukh and it is a border between the Oghuz and Kimeks. The norther branch takes its origin from the Canal of Constantinople which connected the Mediterranean Sea with the Ocean surrounding the Earth. The Bulghars and Rus' are on its right bank. The western branch is the border between the Bulghars and Rus and between the Burtas and Basjirt.

Al-Iṣṭakhṛī described the river Etil: "As to the river Atil, from what I have heard, it emerges from the vicinity of the *Ḥirḥīz* and flows between the *Kīmākīya* and the *Ġuzzīya*, being the boundary between the two. Then it proceeds west behind *Bulḡār*, and turns back in its course eastwards till it passes by the *Rūs*. Then it goes past *Bulḡār*, then *Burṭās*, and turns back in its course till it falls into the sea of the Khazars. It is said that more than seventy streams branch from this river. The main body of its flows by al-*Hazar* till it falls into the sea" [Dunlop, 1954, p. 95; al-Iṣṭakhṛī, BGA I, p. 222; Ibn Ḥawqal, BGA II, p. 393; Ibn Hauqal, 1964, p. 383]. The map and

¹ Figures 1–3 see on the colour plate.

the description are vague, as the latter did not distinct the northern from the western branches. The river branches represent also commercial routes along rivers. The eastern branch must relate to the Kama-Belaja route to the East, whereas the northern branch can be identified with either the upper Volga or Kama. The western branch may refer to the Volga or the river Oka.

The descriptions on the eastern section of the Etil in the Balkhī-tradition puts its emergence in the vicinity of the Khirgiz and it is the border between the Oghuz and Kimek. The *Hudūd al-Ālam* may shed more light on the eastern section of the river. There is chapter on the rivers and mountains in this Persian geographical work: "Another river is the Etil which rises in the same mountains north of the Irtysh; it is a mighty and wide river flowing through the Kīmāk country, down to the village Jūbīn; then it flows westwards along the frontier between the Ghūz and the Kīmāk until it has passed Bulghār; then it turns southward, flowing between the Turk Pechenegs and the Burtās, traverses the town of Atil belonging to the Khazar, and flows into the Khazar Sea" [Minorsky, 1937, p. 75].

The river Irtysh is regarded as a branch of the Etil in the *Hudūd al-Ālam*: "Another river is the Irtysh which rises in the same mountain. It is a large water, black yet drinkable and fresh. It flows between the Ghūz and the Kīmāk until it reaches the village Jūbīn in the Kīmāk country, then it empties itself into the river Etil" [Minorsky, 1937, p. 75].

The Etil and Irtysh are mentioned together in chapter of the Kimeks: "East of this country lives a race of Khirkhiz; south of it are the rivers Artush and Atil; west of it, some of the Khifchākh and some of the Northern Uninhabited Lands" [Minorsky, 1937, p. 99].

There is an unidentified river in front of the description of Etil: "Another river is the RAS (?), flowing up in the North, in the country of the Ghūz. It is a large river of which (the waters) are black and bad-smelling; it rises from the mountain which is on the frontier between the Kīmāk and the Khirkhiz, traverses the Ghūz country and falls into the Khazar sea" [Minorsky, 1937, p. 75]. Minorsky identified it with Asus in the description of Kimek in the work of Gardīzī and the latter is identified with either the Ishim left affluent of the Irtysh or Ilek, a southern tributary of the river Ural [Minorsky, 1937, p. 215; Martinez, 1982, p. 122; Göckenjan, Zimonyi, 2001, p. 110]. Another interpretation can be the Etil as the name *Ra* by Ptolemaios survived in the Islamic tradition represented by al-Khwārizmī [Dzhakson et al., 2007, p. 135–137].

There is a reference to a mountain in the accounts of Etil and Irtysh where they both rise. Its description is among the chapter about the mountains: "Another mountain lies in the northern parts, between the frontier of the Kīmāk and the beginning of the Khirkhīz. It starts from the frontier of Kīmāk and stretches eastwards to the frontier of the Khirkhīz. Then it follows a northern direction till where the inhabited part of the world finishes in the north. In the northern region this mountain is called by the Kīmāk, K.NDĀV.R-BĀGHĪ (*Kundāvar*, *Kandā'ur-taghi*)" [Minorsky, 1937, p. 66]. Minorsky remarked that this mountain can be identified with the Altai Mountains from geographical point of view and as it lay between the lands of the Kīmāk and the Kirgiz and the Irtysh rises in it. As for the *Kundāwar taghi* Minorsky accepted that it might be the Ulu Tau [Minorsky, 1939, p. 202]. The village Jūbīn is mentioned as a settlement in the Kīmāk chapter under the name *dih-Chūbīn*, which is a Persian expression meaning 'village built of wood'. It is "on the bank of a river. In summer numerous people (gather) in it." [Minorsky, 1937, p. 310].

The geographical work of al-Mas'ūdī mentioned the Irtysh flowing into the Caspian Sea: "The Black Artīsh and white Artīsh are among the big and famous streams flowing into this (Khazar) sea. They are two big rivers, each of which exceed the Tigris and Euphrates. There is ten days between their estuaries. The winter and summer quarters of the Kīmākiyya and the Ghuzziyya from the Turks are on them" [al-Masudi, BGA VIII, p. 62; Dzhakson et al., 2007, p. 170–171].

The river eastern section of the Etil network can be identified with the Irtysh without a doubt based on the historical and geographical context. The Irtysh rises in the Altai mountains then flows

north-west in the Kazak steppe and goes into the river Ob. Its western tributaries are the Ishim, Tobol and Konda. The western tributaries of the Tobol and the Konda rise in the Ural Mountains and there are several portages between them and the eastern tributaries of the Kama and Belaya which can be connect the waterways with the Volga.

Maḥmūd al-Kāshgārī completed his famous work on Turkic languages in 1074, and there is a map in his work. The river Etil (*wādī Atil*) is a complex system in the map. Its eastern branch starts from a lake which is not named next to the desert of the Basmils. There are several rivers flow in this lake. The river Ila from the south, the river Ārtiṣh and river Yamār from eastern direction. The Etil flows westward and after crossing two mountains turns to the south. There are at least three other main northern branches starting from the mountains joining the main river from western direction. There is a western attribuent which flows parallel with the main course into the Sea. The eastern branch can refer to the Irtysh-Ob-Beleya-Kama water network, whereas the norther branches to the Kama, Vyatka an upper Volga, and the southern western attribuent must have been identical with the Lower Don.

Maḥmūd al-Kāshgārī remarked in the text of his book: “Ātil is the name of a river in the land of the Kipchaks, it flows in the Sea of Bulghār, with attribuent to (the land of the) Rūs” [Kāshyārī, 1982, p. 112; Golden, 2015, p. 521; Kaplony, 2008, p. 210]. The land of the Kipchaks meant the South Russian and Kazak steppe. The designation of the Bulghār Sea reflects the Islamic tradition which reflects that the Volga Bulghar merchants controlled the commerce in it. In other Muslim sources the designation the Khazar Sea is used which is the Caspian Sea. The attribuent of the river Etil reaching the land of the Rūs is vague, but the map shows that it reaches the sea. So, the identification with the lower Don seems evident in spite of the fact that Black Sea is not a separate item in the map.

Al-Kāshgārī mentioned: “river Ārtiṣh, in Steppes of Yemāk, flows in a lake.” [Kāshyārī, 1982, p. 129]. As the Etil takes its origin from the same lake according to the map, it reflects a water system including the Ārtiṣh, and Etil, similar to the map of Ibn Ḥawqal. It is corroborated by description of al-Kāshgārī on the Turkic dialects: “The most correct Turkic is that of the Yaghma and Tukhshi and the peoples on rivers Ila, Ārtiṣh, Yamār, Ātil as far as Land of Uyghur” [Kāshyārī, 1982, p. 50; Golden, 2015, p. 508] (fig. 2)

The city of Bulghār lies north-east to the Caspian Sea in the map, and al-Kāshgārī stated: “Bulghār is the name of a well-known city of the Turks” [Pritsak, 1959, p. 103; Golden, 2015, p. 518]. The other city, Suwār which is between the river Etil and its attribuent. Al-Kāshgārī identified al-Kāshgārī it with Sakhsīn: “Sakhsīn is a city near Bulghār, it is [also called] Suwār” [Kāshyārī, 1982, p. 330; Pritsak, 1959, p. 103; Golden, 2015, p. 535]. Suwar and Saqsīn two different cities. Suwar was a significant city of the Volga Bulghars which can be identified with the ruins 4 km to the west from the village of Kuznechikha (Tatarstan) where silver dirhams were minted in the middle of the 10th century. The location of Saqsīn is debated, but it must have lied on the lower Volga not far from the Caspian Sea. The identification with former Khazar capital or later Saray Berke seems to be probable. Abū-Ḥāmid al-Ġarnafī lived several years in Saksīn from 1131 and he mentioned that there was Suwar colony in the town which can have been the reason of the misunderstanding [Büchner, Golden, 1995, p. 895–898].

The third map is from the geographical work of al-Idrīsī (1100–ca. 1165) compiled in 1154. He divided the Earth into seven climates from South to North and a climate consists of ten zones from West to East following the work of Ptolemy. The work included a world map and seventy maps. He used the work of al-Jayhānī and Ibn Ḥawqal by the description of Eastern Europe [Krachkovsky, 1957, p. 281–299; Oman, 1986, p. 1032–1035]. Konovalova published the parts of the text concerning Eastern Europe with Russian translation and comments [Konovalova, 2006]

and she studied the relevant hydronyms [Dzhakson et al., 2007, p. 173–206]. The fragment of the relevant part was cut from the reconstructed world map (fig. 3)

Al-Idrīsī described the river Etil in several parts of his book. The 7th part of the climate 5 contains information about the river:

“Al-Hawqālī reported in his book that this sea (Caspian) is also separate, there is no connection with other seas existing on the Earth directly and no mixing with other seas, except the river Rūs known as Āthil which flows into it. This river comes out from the land of the Türks and it flows from eastern direction until it reaches Bulghār. It splits into tributaries one of them flows into the sea of *al-Bāb wa-l-Abwāb* (Caspian) which we described earlier, the other flows in western direction until it reaches the sea of Bonṭus (Black Sea). The author of the Book of Marvels reported that this sea is connected with the sea of Pontus via underground channel. There is ca. six hundred miles uninterrupted land between them. There’s nothing but fish in this sea. The merchants travel on it with their goods from the land of the Muslims to the land of the Khazars, which is among Al-Rān, al-Jīl, Ṭabaristān and Jurjān. The inhabitants of Āthil (town) travel on it to Jurjān and to the other coastal countries, then they return to Āthil and they go by light boats on the river Āthil. They go up the river until they reach al-Bulghāriyya. Then they come down on the upper tributary until they arrive at the sea of Pontus” [al-Idrīsī, 1970–1978, V:7, p. 831–832; Konovalova, 2006, p. 76–77, 109–110].

“The eastern branch of the river Āthil originates from the territory of Basjirt. It flows between al-Bajanakiyya and Bulghāriyya, it is the border between them. It flows toward west until it reaches the area behind Bulghār. Then it turns again to eastern direction crossing al-Rūs, then Bulghār, then Burtās, then al-Khazar until it flows into the sea of the Khazars. there is a branch coming from this river which moves toward western direction until it flows into the sea of Pontus, as we have already mentioned” [al-Idrīsī, 1970–1978, V:7, p. 834–835; Konovalova, 2006, p. 78–79, 111].

The 6th part of climate VI also has data on Etil: “[The town Mātrīqa] it is on the bank of a big river which is called Saqīr. It is a branch coming from the river Āthil to the town. The main branch [of the river Āthil] passes the town Āthil which is on the shore of the sea of Ṭabaristān” [al-Idrīsī, 1970–1978, VI:6, p. 916; Konovalova, 2006, p. 91, 119].

“Al-Khazar is the name of country, its capital is Āthil. Āthil is the name of river, which flows from al-Rūs and Bulghār to it (capital) and flows into the sea of the Khazars. The origin of this river is in the eastern side from the land of ruins crossing the Stinking Land in western direction until it comes the area behind Bulghār. Then it turns again to eastern direction crossing al-Rūs, then Bulghār, then Burtās, until it reaches the land of the Khazars and flows into the sea” [al-Idrīsī, 1970–1978, VI:6, p. 919; Konovalova, 2006, p. 95, 121].

There is another description of the Etil in the 8th part of climate 6:

“As for the rest three rivers, the river Āthil originate from them, they come out from this mountain, which is called Asqāsqa. Then every river flows toward western direction, after a few days they merge and become one river. Then it flows until it reaches the land of Bulghār. Then it turns again to eastern direction reaching in the vicinity of the land of al-Rūsiyya. It is split into two branches there, one of them reaches the town Maṭraḫā and flows into the sea between the town and the town al-Rūsiyya. But as for the other branch, it comes down from the land of Bulghār turning toward south-eastern direction until it reaches the land of the Khazars and flows into the sea of Khazars by [the town] Āthil” [al-Idrīsī, 1970–1978, VI:8, p. 929; Konovalova, 2006, p. 100, 124].

The 7th part of climate VII has new datum on the northern branch of the Etil:

“Māstara and Qāstara are from the towns of Inner Basjirt. They two small towns, few merchants visit them. No one go to them, because they kill those strangers who puts their feet on

their territory and country. These two towns are on the bank of a river which flows into the Äthil” [al-Idrīsī, 1970–1978, V II:7, p. 960; Konvalova, 2006, p. 107, 128].

Comparing the map with the relevant passages the three branches of the river originate from the mountains called *Asqāsqā* whereas in other two cases its origin is from the Land of the Turks, a general term for Turkic speaking peoples in Central Asia or the territory of the Basjirt which lies east of the Volga Bulgharia. As for the *Asqāsqā* mountains may have been identified with the mountains *Asfaṭāfā* in the work of al-Khwārizmī which was taken from Ptolemaios who called it as Ἀσκατάκα. Another possibility is mountain *Asqāsiyā* in climate VII by al-Khwārizmī which is Ασπίσια by Ptolemaios. Al-Khwārizmī mentioned that three rivers come from the mountain *Asqāsiyā* and they become one river called the Long River which might be the Syr Darya, but by another tradition by Suhraḃ the river is called Khazar which can be identified with the Ätil [Konvalova, 2006, p. 254]. The mountain *Asqāsqā* is coming for a literary tradition and perhaps connected with the ethnonym of the Scythians. Rybakov identified it with the Ural Mountain and the three rivers are the upper Belaja, Ufa, and Aj [Konvalova, 2006, p. 255]. However, this mountain must lie in Central Asia. The mountain is in the territory of the Stinking Land.

After the merging of the rivers, it flows western direction toward Basjirt. There are two anonymous rivers coming from north which unite with the Etil. Both rivers originate from the mountain *Āyānī*. There is no comment on it in the text of al-Idrīsī. Konvalova argues that al-Idrīsī himself added the two rivers in his map. The mountain can be identified with the mountain *Alān* by al-Khwārizmī taken from Ptolemaios. The Vjatka and Bjelaja and Kama have been taken in consideration with the identifications of these rivers [Konvalova, 2006, p. 255–257]. In that case the mountain *Āyānī* denoted the Ural Mountain. As for the eastern branch it can be identical with the water system Irtysh, Ob and Tobol, whereas the western branch is the Kama turning northern direction by the estuary of the Belaja. The two towns on its bank called *Māstara* and *Qāstara* which Konvalova connected with the Bashkir tribal names: *Mišer* and *Kese* [Konvalova, 2006, p. 273–274].

Then the Etil flows westward reaching the land of the Volga Bulgars where it turns toward south shortly afterwards the main river branch continues his way south and the tributary flows toward south-west. The mainstream crosses the land of the Bulgars then that of the Burṭās and finally Khazaria and flows into the Caspian Sea known under the names: the sea of al-Bāb wa-l-Abwāb, the sea of the Khazars, the sea of Ṭabaristān. The Volga Bulgar towns, Bulghār and Šuwār then the town Burṭās are on the bank of the main river. Finally, the double towns Äthil in the estuary, which was the capital of Khazaria.

The tributary is called Saqīr/ū, its etymology is uncertain. Sakir might have related to *Seherij* or *Seterij*, the Arabic transcription used for the Kuban River in local languages. This river can be identified either the Kuban or the lower Don. The former is corroborated by the town *Mātrīqa* i.e., Tmutarakan on the eastern bank of the Kerch Strait which is the Arabic transcription of its Greek or Latin names [Konvalova, 2006, p. 134]. At the same time the false identification of the Etil with the river Rūs (Don) by al-Idrīsī may refer to the Don although it is another river on the map which flows into the sea west of the river, Sakir. Konvalova concluded that the place of estuary of the Sakir refers to the river Kuban, whereas the position of its stream on the map and its description as a tributary of the Etil can be only the lower Don from the Volga-Don portage to its estuary to the Azov Sea [Konvalova, 2006, p. 221–224].

The maps and descriptions of Ibn Ḥawqal, al-Kāshgārī and al-Idrīsī reflect a waterway commercial network called Etil originating from Central Asia via Siberia to the Volga-Kama region, a northern way on the Kama and perhaps the Vyatka, a northeastern network including the Oka, Unzha and upper Volga. Coming from its central region i.e., the territory of Volga Bulgars, the lower Volga reached the Caspian Sea whereas via the Volga-Don portage it followed the lower

Don until its estuary to the Azov Sea. The absence of the north-western branch of this water network (the upper Volga) in the map of al-Idrīsī can be attributed to the fact that this section was controlled by the newly strengthening Vladimir-Suzdal Principality by the middle of the 12th century.

ABBREVIATIONS / СОКРАЩЕНИЯ

BGA, I–VIII, 1870–1894 – *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*. Ed. M.J. de Goeje. Lugduni Batavorum, 1870–1894.

EF² – *Encyclopædia of Islam. 2nd Edition*. Ed. by P.J. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs et al. 12 vols. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960–2005.

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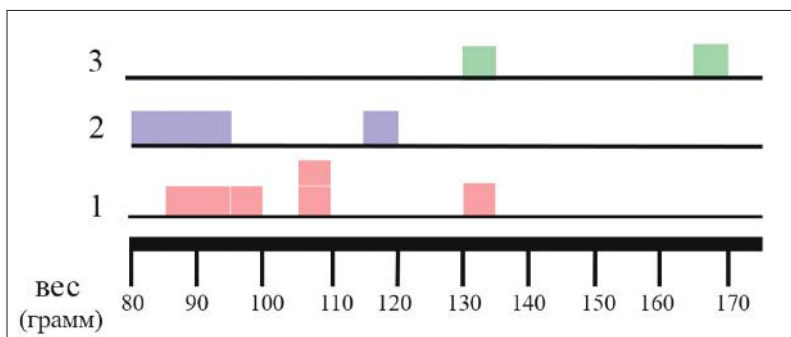


Рис. 6. Схема распределения грузиков из глины по весу
(1 – пончиковидные, 2 – пирамидальные, 3 – каплевидные).

Fig. 6. Weight of clay weights from Memphis
(1 – doughnut-shaped, 2 – pyramidal, 3 – tear-shaped).

Иллюстрации к статье István ZIMONYI

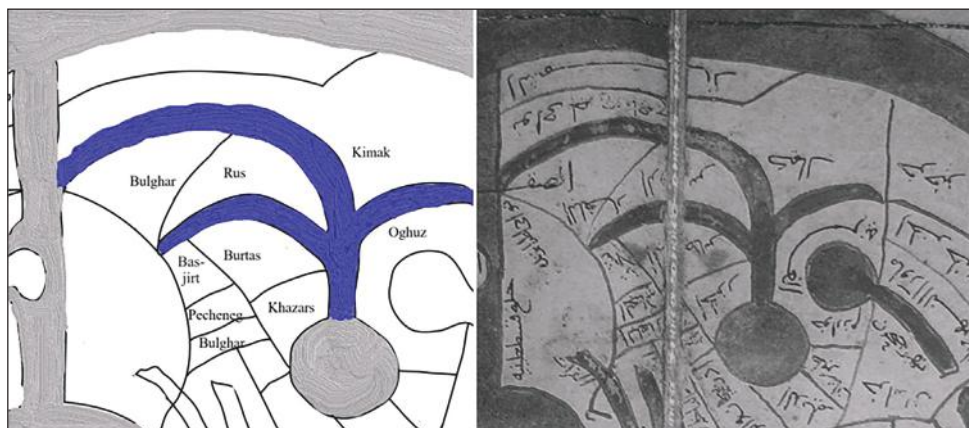


Fig. 1. Fragment of Ibn Hawqal's map of the Earth. MS: Library of Topkapi Saray Ref. A 3346.
Date 1086. A copy of a map from ca. 980.

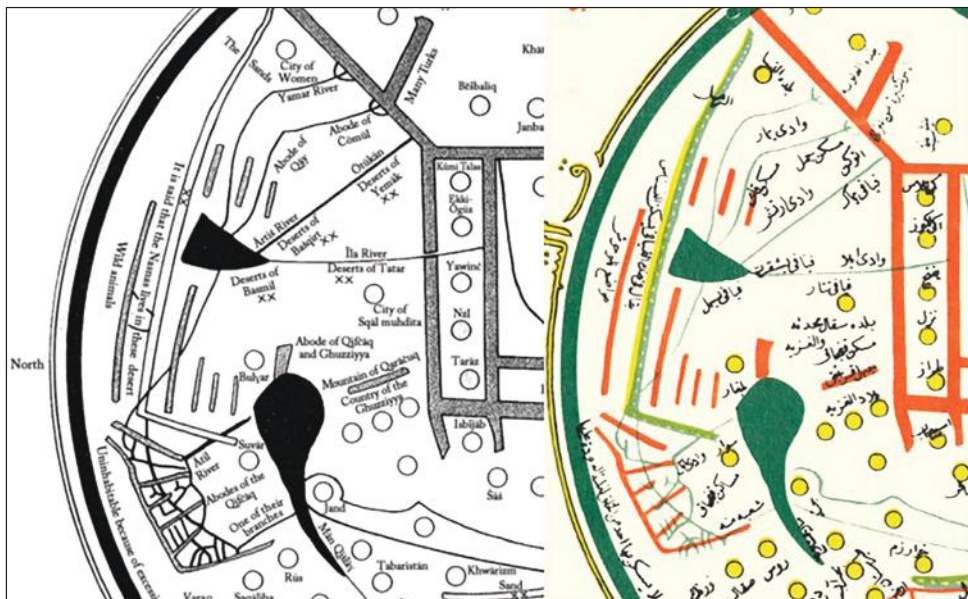


Fig. 2. Northern section from Maḥmūd al-Kāshgārī's Map of the World from circa 1072 adapted from [Golden, 2015, p. 522, 523].



Fig. 3. Fragment portraying the river Etil in al-Idrīsī's World map.