

ARABIC SOURCES ON THE NORSE  
ENGLISH TRANSLATION AND NOTES  
BASED ON THE TEXTS EDITED BY ALEXANDER SEIPPEL  
IN RERUM NORMANNICARUM FONTES ARABICI

by

ALAUDDIN ISMAIL SAMARRAI

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## INTRODUCTION

Oriental sources on the Norse, and the Arabic sources in particular, have been of interest to medieval scholarship in recent years. References to the Norse are scattered throughout the vast mass of medieval Arabic historical and geographical literature. Professor Alexander Seippel has edited the Arabic texts concerned with this subject in his Rerum Normannicarum fontes arabici (Oslo, 1896-1928).

It has been translated into Norwegian by Professor Harris Birkeland and used extensively by Arne Melvinger in his doctorate dissertation Les premieres incursion de Vikings en Occident d'apres les sources arabes (Uppsala, 1955).

I have undertaken the task of translating Seippel into English, with the exception of the two passages from Ibn Isfandiyār's Tārīkh Ṭabaristān and the poem of al-Mutanabbi, the former being written in Persian.

Both the historical facts reported by the Arab writers and the medieval Arab's conception of world geography are of great value and interest to medieval scholars. An attempt has been made to identify as many place, personal and other names as possible. Some names were identified on the basis of their phonetic similarity to what seemed to be the same names as known in Western sources; others were "identified" by sheer guessing; while others still resist identification.

It is important to note, however, that the sources gathered here are not concerned merely with the Northmen. Many other peoples have been reported: European, Central Asiatic, and even legendary peoples such as the Gog Magog, the Amazons, and the Qarqaz who "have horns and small eyes."

I take the pleasure of acknowledging my heavy debt to Professor Robert L. Reynolds for his help, encouragement and guidance in each and every step of the work on this project.

A.I.S.

## Short Biographies

The following are brief biographical notes on some of the authors whose writings have been translated in the following pages. For more complete biographical notes consult Georg Sarton, Introduction to the History of Science, Franz Rosenthal, A History of Muslim Historiography and Philip K. Hitti, History of the Arabs.

### I

#### Ibn Khurdādhbih

Abu-al-Qāsim 'Aubaydullāh ibn 'Abdullāh ibn Khurdādhbih was born about A.D. 825, flourished in Media and later in Sāmarrā where he died c. 912. His most important work is the book of Al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik (composed c. 846).

### II

#### Al-Ya'qūbi

Aḥmad ibn abī Ya'qūb ibn Ja'far ibn Wahb ibn Wāḍiḥ was a Shi'ite historian who flourished in Khurāsān and Armenia; and he died after 891. His most important work is Kitāb al-Buldān (composed ca. 891).

## III

## Ibn al-Faḡīh

Abu-Bakr Aḡmad ibn Muḡammad ibn Ishāq ibn al-Faḡīh al-Hamadḡāni was born in Hamadhān. He composed (c. 903) his book Kitāb al-Buldān which has been lost but frequently quoted by other writers.

## IV

## Ibn Rusteh

Abu 'Alī Aḡmad ibn 'Umar ibn Rusteh is a Persian geographer who flourished in Isfahān (c. 903) where he composed his Al-A'lāq al-Nafīṣah.

## V

## Ibn al-Bahlūl

Abu al-Ḥasan ibn al-Bahlūl (Syr. bar Bahlūl) was a Syriac Nestorian lexicographer of the second half of the tenth century. He compiled, probably in Baghdad, a great Syriac dictionary.

## VI

## Ibn Faḡlān

Aḡmad ibn Faḡlān ibn 'Abbās ibn Rashīd ibn Ḥammād was a muslim traveler; he was sent, in 921, by the Caliph al-Muqtadir as an ambassador to the King of the Volga Bulgars.

## VII

## Ibn al-Biṭrīq

Sa'īd ibn al-Biṭrīq was born in Fustāṭ, Egypt (876), became the Melchite Patriarch of Alexandria from 933 until 940, the year of his death.

## VIII

## Al-Iṣṭakhri

Abu Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Fārisi al-Iṣṭakhri, of Persepolis, Persia flourished in the middle of the tenth century. His major work is *Masālik al-Mamālik* which contains colored maps.

## IX

## Al-Mas'ūdi

Abu al-Hasan 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī al-Mas'ūdi was born in Baghdad c. 912 and died in Cairo in 957. Al-Ma'ūdi is styled the "Herodotus of the Arabs"; he inaugurated among Arab writers the topical method in historical writing. Al-Masu'di had traveled extensively, and his travels carried him as far as Zanzibar. In 947 he wrote his monumental work Murūj al-Dhahab wa Ma'ādin al-Jawhar.

## X

Ibrāhīm ibn Ya'qūb

He was a Jewish merchant and traveler who traveled (in 965) into Germany and visited the court of Otto I the Great at Magdeburg (emperor 936-973).

## XI

Ibn al-Qūṭiyyah

Abu Bakr Muḥammad ibn 'Umar ibn Abd al-'Azīz ibn al-Qūṭiyyah (i.e. son of the Gothic woman). Born, flourished and died (977) in Cordova. He was both an historian and an Arabic grammarian.

## XII

Ibn Ḥawqal

Abu al-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn Ḥawqal (c. 943-977) of Baghdad was a traveler and geographer. He met al-Iṣṭakhri who requested him to revise the latter's geography. He published it under his own name about 977.

## XIII

Al-Muqaddasi

Abu 'Abd-Allāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Abu Bakr al-Muqaddasi (or al-Maqdisi) was born in Jerusalem (947). He visited most of Islam and compiled a book on geography (Aḥsan al Taqāsīm fī Ma'rifat al-Aqālīm).



## XIV

Ibn Abī Ya'qūb al-Nadīm

Abu al-Faraj Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn abī Ya'qūb al-Nadīm al-Warrāq (d. 995) was an historian and bibliographer. He compiled an Index of Sciences (Fihrast al-'Ulūm) which probably contained the catalogue of the libraries of Alexandria and Pergamum. A very small fraction of the number of books quoted in al-Fihrast now exist.

## XV

Al-'Utbi

Ibn Abd-al-Jabbār al-'Utbi flourished at the court of Maḥmūd, the son of Subuktigin (999-1030) whose capital was Ghaznah to the north of India. His most famous work is Kitāb al-Yamīni.

## XVI

Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd

He is the continuer of the work of Eutychius (ibn al-Biṭrīq). He flourished in the first half of the eleventh century.

## XVII

## Al-Bayrūni

Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Bayrūni (or Bīrūnī) was born in Khwarizm (973) and died in Ghazna (1048). He was a Persian with agnostic religious tendencies and anti-Arab feelings. He was a traveler, philosopher, scientist and geographer. Al-Bayrūni's scope of knowledge were almost without parallel in medieval times.

## XIX

## Ibn Ḥayyān

Abū Marwān Ḥayyān ibn Khalaf ibn Ḥusayn ibn Ḥayyān was born at Cordova in 987-88 and died in 1076. His most important work is the 60 volume Kitāb al-Matin.

## XX

## Al-Bakri

Abu 'Ubayd 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abd-al-'Azīz ibn Muḥammad ibn Ayyūb ibn 'Amrwas born in Huelva, Spain and died in 1094. His greatest work is the book of Al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik.

## XXI

## Al-Idrīsī

Abu 'Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abdillāh ibn Idrīs was one of the greatest Arab geographers of the Middle Ages. He was born in Ceuta (1099), studied in Cordova and flourished in Palermo. His great work "The Book of Roger" (also called *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq fi Ikhtirāq al-Āfāq*) contains the description of the world as known to the Middle Ages. He also compiled a geographical encyclopaedia for William I which is larger than the Book of Roger. Al-Idrīsī died in 1166.

## XXII

## Yāqūt

Abu Abdillāh Yāqūt ibn 'Abdillāh Shilāb-al-Dīn al-Ḥamawī was one of the greatest Muslim travelers and geographers. He was born in Asia Minor (c. 1179) of Greek parents, and died at Aleppo in 1229. In his youth he had been a slave. His greatest work was *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, a geographical dictionary. "It is a storehouse of information not simply on geography, but also on history, ethnography, and natural history."

## XXIII

## Ibn al-Athīr

Abu al-Ḥasan Ali ibn Muḥammad ʿIzz-al-Dīn ibn al-Athīr was born in 1160 in Mesopotamia; his father became governor of Mosul in 1180 where Ibn al-Athīr spent most of his time. He was a great medieval chronicler. His major work is the *Al-Kāmil fi al-Tarīkh*; but he also wrote several other works.

## XXIV

## Sibt̄ Ibn al-Jawzi

Abu al-Muzaffar Yūsuf ibn Qizughli ibn Abdillāh Shams al-Dīn (1186-1257); often referred to as Sibt̄ ibn al-Jawzi. His father was a Turkish slave of the vizier ibn Hubayrah (d. 1165). He was born in Baghdad and was educated by his maternal grandfather, the famous ibn al-Jawzi. He compiled a world history (*Mirʿāt al-Zamār*) which has survived in part. He also compiled several other works.

## XXV

Ibn al-ʿAmīd  
(Al-Makīn)

ʿAbdullāh ibn Abī-al-Yāsir ibn Abi al-Makārim ibn al-Amīd was born in Cairo (c. 1205) of a Christian family. He died in Damascus (c. 1274) after an unsuccessful political career. His major work (*Al-Majmūʿ al-Mubārak*) is an important chronicle which was one of the earliest Arabic works to reach the West.

## XXVI

Naṣīr al-Dīn

He was born in 1201 and died in 1274. He was a philosopher, mathematician, astronomer, physician and scientist. He wrote in both Arabic and Persian.

## XXVII

Ibn Sa'īd

Abu al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Mūsā ibn Muḥammad al-Maghribī was born in 1208-9 or 1214 in Spain, and studied in Seville. His travels led him to be the guest of Hūlāgū in Armenia. He died at Damascus in 1274-5 (or at Tunis in 1286-7).

His main work is the geographical book of Bast al-Araq fi Ṭūlihā wa al-'Araq which is based upon Ptolemy and al-Idrisi.

## XXVIII

Al-Qazwīnī

Abu Yaḥyā Zakarīyā ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Qazwīnī was born at Qazwīn, Persia (1203). He became for some time qādi in Wāsiṭ and Ḥillah, Iraq; he died in 1283. He was of great knowledge but poor critical spirit; his two main works are 'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt (Cosmography) and 'Ajā'ib al-Buldān (Geography).

## XXIX

## Al-Shīrāzi

Maḥmūd ibn Mas'ūd ibn Muṣliḥ Qutb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzi was born at Shīrāz in 1236. He was the pupil of al-Ṭūsi. He held some political and diplomatic posts. He died in Tabrīz in 1311. He wrote many treatises: in geometry, astronomy, geography, physics, medicine, philosophy and religion.

## XXX

## Ibn al-'Idhāri

A Moroccan historian who lived toward the end of the thirteenth century. He wrote Al-Bayān al-Mughrib, a history of Africa and Spain.

## XXXI

## Al-Waṭwāt

Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Yahya al-Waṭwāt Jamāl al-Dīn al-Anṣāri al-Kutubi al-Warrāq was born in 1235 and died in 1318. He wrote an encyclopaedia of natural science and geography.

## XXXII

## Al-Dimashqi

Shams al-Dīn Abu 'Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Abi Ṭālib was a Syrian cosmographer (d. 1326). His main work is the book of Nukhbat al-Dahr fī 'Ajā'ib al-Barr wa al-Bahr, a cosmographical treatise.

## XXXIII

## Abu al-Fidā

Abu al-Fidā Isma'īl ibn 'Alī, 'Imād al-Dīn al-Ayyūbi was born in Damascus (1273) for the famous Ayyūbid family of Saladin. In spite of his busy military life, Abu al-Fidā did not neglect his education. He died at Hamah in 1331.

His main works are Mukhtaṣar Tārīkh al-Bashar and Taqwīm al-Buldān.

## XXXIV

## Al-Nuwayri

Shihāb al-Dīn Abu al-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayri, an Egyptian historiographer and encyclopaedist (1279-1332). He was born in Upper Egypt and, like his father, he became a government secretary. He wrote his only work, the encyclopaedic Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab.

## XXXV

## Al-Dhahabi

Shams al-Dīn Abu 'Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabi, a Muslim Turkish historian (1274-1348). He studied in Damascus, Mecca, Alexandria and several other places. He was in his early life an historian, but after his blindness in 1342 he became mainly concerned with collecting biographies.

## XXXVI

## Al-Ḥarrāni

Najm al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Ḥamdān ibn Shabīb al-Ḥarrāni, an Iraqi cosmographer who flourished in Egypt (c. 1332). He was the writer of the encyclopaedia Jāmi' al-Funūn.

## XXXVII

## Ibn Khaldūn

Abu Zayd Abd-al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Khaldūn was the greater philosopher of history and the creator of the science of sociology. Ibn Khaldūn is too famous and great to need introduction.



## XXXVIII

Al-'Ayni

Abu Muḥammad Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad al-'Ayni was born at Aintab in 1360 and lived in Cairo. He was a sufi, then entered into political life. He did some translation into Turkish, but wrote his own works in Arabic. His most famous work is the universal chronicle 'Iqd al-Jumān.

## XXXIX

Ibn al-Wardi

Siraj al-Din 'Umar ibn Muhammad ibn al-Wardi (fl. 1446). His major work is Kharīdat al-'Ajā'ib.

Chapter One  
Notices Concerning the Heathen<sup>1</sup>

I

From the Book of  
Murūj al-Dhahab wa Ma'ādin al-Jawhar  
Al-Mas'ūdi (A.D. 947)

He said: It was before the year 300/912 that ships came down to Spain<sup>2</sup> by sea; (in which) there were thousands of people who raided its shores. The people of Spain claimed that they (the raiders) were a nation of Heathen who fell upon them every two-hundred years, and that they came to their land from a gulf which was opposite to the Ocean Sea and not from the gulf on which was the copper tower.<sup>3</sup>

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1. The word Majūs has been translated throughout as "Heathen". Majūs originally meant the fire-worshipping Magi of Persia. By extension it was applied as a general term to non-Jewish, non-Christian, non-Muslim peoples who did not have a particular national or tribal name. In England, in this period, the Norse invaders were designated as "the Heathen". It is in this fashion that the term Majūs is translated in the following pages.
  2. The Arabic texts always designated Muslim Spain as al-Andalus, a much wider territory than the small territory which is specifically Andalusia to the modern Spanish or English.
  3. The Tower of Cadiz. See p. 15 below.

And I opine, and Allāh knows better, that that gulf is connected with the Sea of Maeotis and Pontus and that that nation was the Rūs whom we have mentioned before earlier in this book, for no one traversed those seas which are connected with the Ocean Sea except them -- And he said: And I have found in a book I came across in Fustāt,<sup>4</sup> Egypt, in 330/941 (which) Godomar (or Gondomir),<sup>5</sup> the bishop of the Frankish city of Gerona<sup>6</sup> had presented in 328/939 to al-Ḥakam ibn 'Abd-al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd-al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥakam ibn Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Mu'āwiyah ibn Hishām ibn 'Abd-al-Malik ibn Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam, the crown prince of his father 'Abd-al-Raḥmān the ruler of Spain who was addressed at that time in his domain as the Prince of the Faithful, that the first Frank king, Clovis<sup>7</sup> was a Heathen and his wife Clotilda<sup>8</sup> had converted him to Christianity. Then his son Theodoric<sup>9</sup> reigned after him; and after Theodoric his son Dagobert<sup>10</sup> reigned; then after him his son Theodoric

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4. I.e., Old Cairo.  
 5. Ghudmār غدمار  
 6. Jirundah جرنده  
 7. Qlūdwiyaḥ قلودوية  
 8. Ghiruṭild غرطلد  
 9. Tudrīq تدريق  
 10. Dāqūbart داقوبرت

reigned; then after him Carloman son of Dagobert reigned; then after him Charles,<sup>11</sup> his son, reigned; then after him, his son Pepin<sup>12</sup> reigned; then after him Charles, son of Pepin reigned who reigned for twenty-six years and he was a contemporary of al-Ḥakam, the ruler of Spain. His sons competed with each other after him and differences befell them until the Franks destroyed one another because of them. And Louis<sup>13</sup> son of Charles became their king and ruled for twenty-eight years and six months; he was the one who came to Tortosa and besieged it. Then after him Charles son of Louis reigned, and he was (the one) who exchanged presents with Muḥammad ibn 'Abd-al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥakam ibn Hishām ibn 'Abd-al-Raḥmān ibn Mu'āwiyah ibn Hishām ibn 'Abd-al-Malik ibn Marwān; and Muḥammad was addressed as imām, and his reign was thirty-nine years and six months. Then his son Louis reigned after him for six years. Then a Frankish general called Bozo<sup>14</sup> revolted against him and he became king over the Franks. He remained their king for eight years and he was (the one) who reconciled the Heathen

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11. Qārlah      قارلة  
 12. Bibīn      بين  
 13. Ludwīq      لدويق  
 14. Būsuh      بوسه

(in order that they would not invade his land) for seven years by 600 raṭls of gold and 600 raṭls of silver to be paid by the ruler of the Franks to them.

II

From Tārīkh al-Andalus

Ibn al-Qūṭīyyah (d. A.D. 977)

He said: And 'Abd-al-Rahmān built the Mosque of Seville, and the wall of the city he built because of its conquest by the Heathen when they entered in 230/844. Their conquest was in his days; and the people were frightened and fled before them and the people of Seville evacuated Seville and fled to Carmona and the mountains of Seville. None of the people of the west fought them. Then the people of Cordova and the allied provinces were convoked (to war) and the vizirs went out with the people of Cordova and the surrounding provinces; and the people of the frontier had been mustered since the beginning of the movement of the Heathen when they occupied the extreme west and captured the plain of Lisbon. The vizirs and their followers camped at Carmona, but they could not fight that nation because of its great power, until the people of the frontier came to help them. And among the

people of the frontier was Mūsa ibn Qasi<sup>15</sup> (who) came after 'Abd-al-Rahmān ibn al-Ḥakam had petted him and reminded him of his loyalty to al-Walīd ibn 'Abd-al-Malik and of the Islamization of his (Mūsa's) grandfather at his (al-Walīd's) hand. He (Mūsa) was softened somewhat and came with a huge number (of men). When he (Mūsa) came before Carmona he separated himself from the rest of the people of the frontier and the army of the vizirs and he camped independently. When the people of the frontier and the vizirs conferred, they inquired about the movement of the (Heathen) people; and their scouts informed them that everyday contingents (of Heathen) came out (into the country) in the direction of Firrīsh<sup>16</sup> and Fuente de Cantos<sup>17</sup> and in the direction of Cordova and Moror.<sup>18</sup> They (the Muslim commanders) asked about a good place for an ambush where they could hide themselves near the capital of Seville.

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15. The banu-Qasi are "an old Visigothic family which had embraced Islam, incorporated within itself in the middle of the ninth century Saragossa, Tudela and other important frontier towns. The banu-Qasi were in league with their neighbours to the west, the Kings of Leon." See Philip K. Hitti, History of the Arabs (London, 1949), 518.

16. فريش (Firrrix). Al-Idrīsi names this castle, which was located near Constantina. See Academia de la Historia, Collecion de Obras Arabigas (Madrid, 1867), I, 253.

17. Laqant لقنت. Identified as Fuente de Cantos. Ibid., 253.

18. Mawrūr مورور

They were guided to the village of Kintush Ma'āfir<sup>19</sup> which was to the south of Seville. (The Muslims) went out to it during the night and made an ambush in it. In it there was an early church on whose top they stationed a watchman (camouflaged) with a bundle of fire-wood on his head. When the morning came, a party of 16,000 of the Heathen went out intending (to go) in the direction of Moror. When they arrived in front of the village, the watchman gave them (the Muslims) a signal and they did not go out against them until (the Heathen) had gone well past the village. When the Heathen had gone far (past the village) they cut them off from the city (Seville) and they were all cut down with swords. Then the vizirs advanced and entered Seville and found the governor besieged in the city's citadel and he went out to them and the people withdrew. It came to pass that two (other) parties of Heathen had gone out (other than the destroyed party): One party near Fuente de Cantos and another near Cordova, near (the territory of the tribe of) the banu-al-Layth. When the Heathen in the city became aware of the horses and the coming of the (Muslim) army and the destruction of the party which had gone out in the direction of Moror they fled to their ships and went upstream from Seville (until they came) near the castle of

19.

کنتش معافر

al-Za‘wāq<sup>20</sup> (where) they met their raiding parties and embarked (them on) their ships. (Then) they went downstream while the (Muslim) people distressed them and stoned and (shot) them with slings. When they were one mile below Seville they called upon the people "If you want ransom then leave us alone", and they were left alone. They (then) allowed the prisoners whom they had with them to be ransomed and most of them were ransomed. They did not take gold or silver for ransom but they took clothes and food. They left Seville and went towards Nākūr<sup>21</sup> where they captured Jadd ibn Ṣāliḥ, and the Prince ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥakam ransomed him, which is the favor that the (tribe of the) banu-Ṣāliḥ owe the Umayyads. Then they harried both of the two coasts (of the Mediterranean) until they reached the land of the Rūm; and they reached Alexandria in that journey which continued for fourteen years. The vizirs (then) ordered the building of the wall of Seville, and with that job ‘Abdullāh ibn Sinān, a Syrian freed-slave, was charged. He was the most favored of the special companions of ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥakam while a boy; later he made him his

20. **قلعة الزعواق**. It may be identified with Kalaa Raawak (**قلعة رعواق**) which is almost certainly to be identified with Alcala de Guadaira. See Academia, Colleccion, I, 256-7.

21. **ناكور**. Possibly Nekur, a town situated about one mile inland from the Moroccan coast, almost on longitude 14°.



companion when he became a Caliph. Then he ('Abdullāh) performed the pilgrimage to Mecca. (Just as he) came back from pilgrimage he encountered that invasion. Then he was sent to build the wall of Seville; and his name is on its gates.

The sun suffered dreadful eclipse in the days of 'Abd-al-Rahmān, for which the people were gathered in the Mosque of Cordova and the qāḍi Yahya ibn Ma'mar led their prayer; neither before nor after had there been an eclipse prayer called in Spain, down to the present. 'Abd-al-Rahmān used to see in his sleep, when the Mosque of Seville was completed, that he entered it and found the Prophet (may Allāh bless him and have peace upon him) dead and laid down in its front. He woke up depressed and asked the interpreters about it and they said: "This is a place whose religion will die." And after that the Heathen capture of the city took place. More than one of the elders of Seville have related that they (the Heathen) lighted fire arrows and then shot them to the ceiling of the mosque. When (the parts) around an arrow caught fire the arrow fell. The marks of the arrows are still visible on its ceiling to our present time. When they despaired of burning it, they piled wood and mats in one of the pavements in order to start a fire that would take the ceiling. Then from the side of the niche a young man came out to them and forced them out of the mosque, keeping them out for three days until the

calamity befell them. The Heathen described the youth who forced them out as perfectly beautiful. Then the Prince 'Abd-al-Rahman ibn al-Hakam prepared himself and ordered the founding of a manufacturing establishment in Seville and (also) the building of ships. He equipped himself with seamen from the coasts of Spain, (whom) he recruited and paid well. And he equipped himself with engines and naphtha. When the Heathen came for the second time in 244/858 in the days of Prince Muhammad they were met at the mouth of the River of Seville,<sup>22</sup> in the sea, and they were defeated and (some) of their ships were burned and they departed.

### III

From the book of Al-Muqtabas fi Tārikh al-Andalus  
Ibn-Hayyān (A.D. 988-1076)

Sa'dūn ibn al-Fath al-Sarnabāqi, the friend of 'Abd-al-Rahmān ibn Marwān al-Jillīqi<sup>23</sup> and his match in rebelling, in being accursed, in insubordination to the sovereign and schism from the (rest of the) Muslims, was

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22. I.e., Guadalquivir.

23. I.e., the Galician. He was a daring renegade of Merida and Badajoz and the founder of an independent principality. He was also an ally of Alfonso III, King of Leon. See Hitti, Arab History, 518.

a brave man and a shedder of blood, (full of) deceit, shrewdness and courage. In the heights of his land and its edges, he was a keen and shrewd guide. He fortified himself in the fortress of Figueiruela(?)<sup>24</sup> between the valley of Tagus<sup>25</sup> and the city of Colimbria.<sup>26</sup> Great events happened to him. The Heathen who were operating on the western coast of Spain had captured him in the days of Prince Muḥammad. Then a Jewish trader, who desired to make profit from him, ransomed him. He took loans from the Jew until he ran away from him and betrayed his obligation and made him lose his money. Then he went to the mountain, which is associated with him, between Colimbria and Santarem,<sup>27</sup> and he disturbed the peoples of both faiths, the Muslims and the Christians. Many events happened to him until the tyrant Alfonso<sup>28</sup> of Galicia killed him.

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24. فقيرواله

25. Tājah تاجه

26. فلنبرية . It is also called Coimbra.

27. Shantarīn شنترين (i.e., St. Irene).

28. Adhfunsh اذفنش . He certainly is to be identified with Alfonso III of Leon.

## IV

From the book of

Al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik

Al-Bakri (d. A.D. 1094)

He said: And the Heathen, may Allāh curse them, raided the city of Nakūr in the year 244/858 and they captured it, pillaged it and captured (those) who were in it except whoever Allāh had delivered by flight. Among those they captured were Amat-al-Rahmān and Khan'awlah, the daughters of Wāqif ibn al-Mu'tasim ibn Ṣāliḥ; then the Imām Muḥammad ibn 'Abd-al-Rahmān ransomed them. The Heathen stayed in Nakūr eight days.

And he said: And the city of Aṣīla<sup>29</sup> is new. The reason for building it was that the Heathen appeared in its harbor two times. In the first time they came intentionally and claimed that they had in it wealth and treasures. The Berbers gathered together to fight them, but they (the Heathen) said: "We did not come to fight but we have treasures in this place; so, go aside until we bring them out and we shall share them with you." The Berbers agreed on that and withdrew. The Heathen dug a place and dug out much mouldy millet. The Berbers saw its yellow color and

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29. اصيلي; also Arsilla, a city on the Moroccan Atlantic coast.

thought it to be gold, and they hurried towards it and the Heathen fled to their ships and the millet was the share of the Berbers; so, they regretted. Then they asked the Heathen to come and dig out the wealth but they refused and said: "You have broken your promise and we shall not trust your apology" and they went to Spain where they appeared in Seville in 229/843 in the days of the Imām 'Abd-al-Rahmān ibn al-Hakam. As for their second appearance there, the wind had blown them into that harbor upon their departure from Spain. Many of their ships perished in the western side of the mouth of the harbor. That place is still known today as the Gate of the Heathen.<sup>30</sup>

The people made the site of Asila a center and came to it from all the cities. A fair used to be held in it three times a year, which were the times of their gathering, and those were in the months of Ramaḍān and Dhi al-Hijjah and in 'Āshūrā.'

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30. Bāb al-Majūs باب المجوس

From the Book of

Nuzhat al-Mushtāq fi Ikhtirāq al-Āfāq

Al-Idrīsī (A.D. 1166)

He said: Now we shall return to the mention of Sfax:<sup>31</sup>  
We say that from it to the edge of the sandy (ground)<sup>32</sup>  
there are four miles, and from the edge of the sandy  
(ground) to the south, which is the beginning of the gulf,<sup>33</sup>  
to the Castle of the Heathen(?) (there are) four miles; and  
from it to the Castle of Banqah(?)<sup>34</sup> there are 10 miles;  
and from the Castle of Banqah to the Castle of Tanīdhah(?)<sup>35</sup>  
(there are) eight miles; and from it to the Castles of the  
Rūm(?) (there are) four miles; and from them to the city of  
Gabes<sup>36</sup> (there are) seventy-five miles.

And he said: And the island of Saltis<sup>37</sup> is surrounded  
by sea from all sides. From the west it has a point, on one  
of its extremities, near the mainland which is about half a  
stone's throw (away). From there they (the inhabitants of

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31. Sfaqis سفاقس, a city on the northern edge of the  
Gulf of Gabes in Tunisia.
32. Al-Ramlah الرملة
33. The Gulf of Gabes.
34. قصر بنقة or نيقة. See note in Seippel, p. VI.
35. قصر تنيذة
36. Qābus قابس
37. Shaltīsh شلتيش

the island) pass over to get drinking water. It is an island whose length is a little more than one mile. Its city is in the south side. And there is an arm of the sea to which the mouth of the river of Niebla<sup>38</sup> is connected; and its mouth widens until it becomes more than one mile (wide). The ships go up the river until that arm becomes narrow such that the width of the river alone is half a stone throw. The river comes out from the foot of a mountain on which is the city of Huelva.<sup>39</sup> There the road to Niebla is connected. The city of Saltis has no wall or fence, but it is (composed of) buildings which are connected to each other. It has a market, and in it there is the profession of blacksmithing which the natives of the land are unable to handle due to the roughness of the iron. This is the profession of the anchorages in which the rough cargo ships lay anchor. The Heathen had conquered it (several) times; and when its people hear of the presence of the Heathen they flee and evacuate it.

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38. Lablah لبله

39. Walbah ولبه

## VI

From the Book of Al-Jughrāfiyah

And the author said: And in this city (meaning Cadiz) was the amazing tower whose height was one-hundred yards. And it was square (and) built of coarse soft rock<sup>40</sup> (which) was of exact carpentry, supported with red copper pillars. On the top of this tower (there was) another square, equal to one-third of the first (one). On the top of this little square (there was) a truncated pyramid with four faces; on each face of the little square (there is) a face of the pyramid. And on the top of the platform (there was) a white square marble of two spans by two spans. On that marble (there was) a statue of a human being of the utmost excellence in perfection and the best construction. He was facing the west, adjacent to the sea and turning towards the north. His left arm stretched (forward), clenching his fist and pointing with his index finger to the mouth of the gulf, which comes out from the greatest sea, known as the Strait<sup>41</sup> and lies between Tangiers and the peninsula of Tarifa, as if he was showing the path. He

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40. In Seippel it reads **الكذان الامرشي** which means "the coarse camel-rope". This is obviously a spelling mistake; and I suggest that it should be read **الكذان الامرشي** where **الكذان** is a kind of soft rock.

41. Al-Zuqāq **الزقاق**; i.e., the Strait of Gibraltar.



brought forth his right-hand from under his cloak and clenched it; and in his hand (there was) a stick as if he was pointing with it to the sea. Many people claimed that it was a key; in that they were mistaken. The author said: "I have seen it many times, and I have never seen a key in his hand; but it appears in his hand like a little stick by reason of its remoteness from the ground. And someone who was present at the destruction of the idol, (who was one of the chiefs who were present at the destruction of that tower), said (that) which was in his hand had been a stick whose length was twelve spans; on its head there was a slit like the compass(?)". The mention of the destruction of this tower will come in another place. Al-Mas'ūdi said in the book of Al-Tanbīh wa al-Ishrāf according to what he had learned about the building of this Tower, that it had been built by the Mighty King<sup>42</sup> who had also built the seven idols which were in the land of the Negroes; and we were informed that those idols resembled each other. And al-Mas'ūdi said: If that which we have been informed concerning the idol of Cadiz was correct, (then) it was built in order to be a guide for the sea-route, and that its left hand was stretched out (pointing out) the Strait, as if it was saying, "The path is here". Many people claimed that this statue was of gold, because on it there was glowing light that changed

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42. Hercules

color when the sun rose and when it set. Sometime it became green and at other times it became red as the irridescent neck of a pigeon. Azure-blue greenish was its predominant color. This tower served the Muslims as the guide to the sea; by its (help) they entered the Great Sea and came out of it. Whoever wanted to travel from this small sea to the land of Maghrib and to Lisbon and other (places) used to enter the sea and when they got out of (sight) of the tower they (would) set their sails and proceed to whatever Maghrib ports they wanted, such as Sela,<sup>43</sup> Afnā(?) and the land of Sous.<sup>44</sup> Since this tower has been destroyed, its service (to navigation) has ceased. Its destruction (took place) in the year 540/1145 in the beginning of the revolutionary disturbances in Spain, and 'Ali ibn 'Īsa ibn Maymūn destroyed it when covetousness spread in the peninsula of Cadiz (and people thought) that that statue was of gold. When he uprooted it he found it of latten<sup>45</sup> washed with good gold. So, he extracted from it 12,000 dīnārs of gold, and its use for movement in the sea was spoiled. The people of Spain had claimed that that talisman served to make the sea useful and that the sea would be navigable as long as it existed, and that it would not be navigable if it was

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43. سلا ; situated not very far to the north of Rabat on the northwestern African coast.

44. Al-Sūs السوس ; it is to the south of Sela.

45. Al-Laṭūn اللاطون

destroyed. But when it was destroyed nothing changed in the sea except one thing; i.e., there had been many great ships going out in the sea and the people of Spain called them carracks.<sup>46</sup> Those ships could sail forward or backward with square sails; and in them people called Heathen were sailing who were strong and fierce and sturdy in sailing the sea. And when they appeared the peoples of the coasts would evacuate (their places) before them and run away from (the coasts) by reason of fearing the Heathen. They appeared only every six or seven years. They used to appear with forty ships at least and they might appear with one-hundred or less or more. They used to defeat anyone they met in the sea, capturing them and carrying them away (as slaves). That aforementioned talisman was in view to them at the mouth of the Strait, so, they could enter it (going) towards the islands of this small sea<sup>47</sup> and they reached the boundries of Syria. After that tower was destroyed none of those carracks appeared except two; one of them was wrecked at the harbor of the Heathen and the other one was wrecked at Trafalgar, and that was in the year 545/1150 and after that they never appeared. No travel nor movement was hindered in the sea because of (the destruction of) that tower, except that movement of the Heathen.

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46. Qarāqir قراقر

47. The Mediterranean.

And he said: And from the land of Galicia, which is on the coast of the Great Sea in the west, there came out carracks which traversed the Strait and whose people are known as Heathen. They (the ships) have been mentioned before.

## VII

From the Book of

Al-Istibṣār fī 'Ajā'ib al-Amṣār

The author said: The city of Asīla was a great and ancient city, prosperous and (well) populated, rich and fertile. It had a frequented port; and the cause of its destruction was that when the Heathen left the Great Sea, the first (port) they found (in the Mediterranean) was the city of Asīla, and they stopped in its anchorage, destroying whatever they could (destroy) of it. And the Berbers gathered and fought them. Their (relation) with them (continued) as such until it was abandoned, (thanks also) to the disturbances that befell the inhabitants of that land. It is said that the Heathen went to them once and the Berbers gathered together to fight them. But they (the Heathen) told them, "We did not come to fight but we have in your country goods and treasures; leave us alone until we dig them out and we shall share them with you." The Berbers agreed to that and withdrew from the site which (the Heathen) had mentioned to them. Then the Heathen dug up a spot which they

had claimed and they found in the place buried treasures of millet which they dug out. When the Berbers saw the yellowness of millet from afar they thought that it was gold. They attacked (the Heathen), betraying their promise, and the Heathen fled to their ships. When the Berbers obtained the millet they regretted and tried to persuade the Heathen to come back and dig out the wealth but they refused and said to them: "We have seen you betraying your promise, so we shall never trust you."

## VIII

From the Book of

Al-Muṭrib fi Ash'ār Ahl Al-Maghrib

Ibn Diḥyah (A.D. 1159)

He said: And when the ambassadors of the king of the Heathen came to Sultan 'Abd-al-Raḥmān<sup>48</sup> asking for peace after they left Seville and their onslaught near it, then their defeat and the death of the commander of the fleet in it, he opined that he would negotiate with them for accepting it (the peace). So, he commanded al-Ghazāl<sup>49</sup>

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48. 'Abd al-Raḥmān II (822-852).

49. He is Yaḥyā ibn al-Hakam (al-Bakrī al-Jayyānī), known as Al-Ghazāl "because of his extraordinary vigor and beauty which he seemed to have preserved beyond the age of seventy." See A.R. Nykl, Hispano-Arabic Poetry (Baltimore, 1946), 24.

to take his message and go with the ambassadors of their king, by reason of Al-Ghazāl's quickness of perception, presence of mind and the goodliness of his answers, his courage and boldness and (his ability) to enter and leave any door. And he was accompanied by Yaḥyā ibn Ḥabīb. He went to the city of Silves<sup>50</sup> (by) a beautiful and perfectly equipped ship that had been built for the two of them. The king of the Heathen was negotiated with (on the basis) of his letter and he was rewarded for his presents. The ambassadors of their king sailed with the ship of al-Ghazāl in their ship which they came with. When they were parallel to the great cape which goes out into the sea, which is the end of Spain in the end of the west and it is the mountain known as Aluwiyah,<sup>51</sup> the sea swelled and the wind blew on them fiercely and the situation reached the degree that al-Ghazāl has described saying:

Yaḥyah told me: Behold, we have become among waves unto the likeness of mountains;

And winds have befallen us: westerly wind and northerly wind;

They have torn the two sails, and the loops of those ropes have been cut off;

And the Angel of Death, walked towards us stretching his arms;

50. Shilb شلب . A city in southern Portugal where "one would meet even ploughmen capable of improvising verse". See Hitti, Arab History, 562.

51. الرية . Possibly Ulia on the western coast of Galicia.

So, we saw death with our own eyes once and again.

O my comrade! the people had no use for us.

It came to pass that al-Ghazāl escaped the dread of those seas and from challenging dangers and he reached the beginning of the land of the Heathen, to one of its islands. They stayed in it (several) days and repaired their ships and rested themselves. And the ship of the Heathen preceded (them) to their king and informed him of the coming of the ambassadors after them; and he was delighted with that. And he treated them with dignity. Then they proceeded to the headquarters of his government, which is a great island in the Ocean Sea, in which there were gardens and flowing waters; between it and the mainland (there were) three water-courses, which are (equal to) three-hundred miles. (There are) in it an uncountable number of Heathen; and near that island (there are) many islands, some are small and some big, and all their inhabitants were Heathen. Those who were next to them on the mainland, who were several-days-journey distant, were also Heathen; but today they are Christians and have abandoned fire-worship and their previous religion and became Christians, except the inhabitants of (some) of their islands (which are) isolated in the sea, who are still on their previous religion of fire-worship, and marrying the mother and the sister and similar types of shame. And these (Christians) fight them and curse them.

Then the king ordered for them one of their (the people's) most beautiful houses (to be prepared) and he dispatched to them (people) who would meet them. And the Heathen gathered to see them and they saw the wonder of wonders in their shapes and dress. Then they were settled with dignity and they stayed that day. Then he (the king) summoned them to see him and al-Ghazāl made a condition on him that he would not prostrate himself and that nothing would ever make them violate their tradition. And he agreed to that. When they proceeded towards him he sat for them in (his) best appearance; and he gave his orders and the entrance which led to him was narrowed such that no one could enter upon him without bowing down. When he (al-Ghazāl) reached it (the door) he sat on the ground and advanced his feet and slid once on his buttocks, and when he passed through the door he stood up, and (behold) the king had decked himself with a great many arms and complete decorations. But that did not awe him (al-Ghazāl) nor did it frighten him, for he stood up presenting himself before him (the king) and said: "Peace be upon thee, O King, and upon those who are within thy sight; noble salutation for thee; and (mayest) thou not cease to enjoy power and endurance and nobility which lead thee to honour in the world and the hereafter which is always related to the neighbourhood of the Everliving, Self-existing, who, everything will perish except He. Judgement is His and to Him is the returning." And the interpreter



translated to the king what al-Ghazāl had said, and the king held the speech to be good and he said: "This is one of the wisemen of the nation and one of their clever men." And he had been astonished at his sitting on the ground and advancing his feet when he entered, and he said: "We wanted to submit him to contempt, but he confronted our faces with his shoes; had he not been an ambassador, we would have abhorred that in him!" Then al-Ghazāl passed to him the letter of 'Abd-al-Rahmān, and the letter was read and interpreted for him and he regarded it favorably; then he took it with his hands and lifted it, then he put it on his lap. Then he gave his orders, and the leather-bags of the presents were opened. And he beheld all that they contained of clothes and vessels and he admired them. Then he gave orders and they left for their house; and he enlarged their allowances. Al-Ghazāl held with them memorable councils and made famous speeches, in some of them he argued with their learned men and made them cry; and in some of them he struggled with their courageous men and he disabled them. When the wife of the King of the Heathen heard of al-Ghazāl, she invited him to see him. When he entered her presence, he greeted (her), then gazed at her for a long spell, a look of amazement on his face. So, she said to her interpreter: "Ask him about his gazing at me. Why does he do it? Is it by reason of excess of appreciation or its opposite?" And he

said: "It is for no (reason) but that I never suspected that there was in the world a sight like this; and I have seen with our king women (who) were chosen for him from all the nations, but I never saw among them a beauty such as this." And she said to her interpreter: "Ask him if he is serious or joking." And he said: "Nay, but Serious!" And then she said: "Then there is no beauty in their land." And al-Ghazāl said: "Then show me some of your women, so that I compare with them." And the queen sent for (some) women renowned for their beauty and they presented themselves. Then he looked them carefully, up and down; then he said: "They have beauty, but not in the likeness of the beauty of the queen, for her beauty and her proportionate features are not apparent to everyone, but the poets care for it. And if the queen like for me to describe her beauty, her merits and her intelligence in verse that will be sung in all our land, so, I shall do." She became greatly delighted with that and her face shone and she ordered a gift for him but al-Gazāl refused to take it saying: "I shall not do it." And she said to the interpreter: "Ask him why he does not accept my gift? Is it because he belittles it or because he belittles me?" And he asked him. Then al-Ghazāl said: "Her gift is great, and receiving (a gift) from her is an honor, for she is a queen and a daughter of a king; but it is enough gift for me to look at her and see her friendliness toward me; this is enough gift for me. But I want her to

reward me by allowing me to have freedom to come into her presence always." When the interpreter translated for her his speech she became more delighted and more admiring of him; and she said: "His (desired) reward will be fulfilled and whenever he likes to come to visit me he shall not be stopped, and I shall bestow upon him generosity and welcome." And al-Ghazāl thanked her and prayed for her and went away.

Tammām ibn 'Alqamah said: I heard al-Ghazāl relating this story, so I said to him: "And she had some of that degree of beauty?"; and he said: "By thy father! She had sweetness but I attracted by this speech her love and obtained from her more than what I desired." Tammām ibn 'Alqamah said: And one of his friends told me saying: And the wife of the king of the Heathen became so fond of al-Ghazāl that she could not bear to go without seeing him each day, but she sent after him (everyday) to stay with her telling her of the customs of the Muslims and their stories and their lands and their neighboring nations. He rarely departed from her without a gift of clothes, food or perfume bestowed by her upon him. Then their affair became widely known; and his friends disapproved of it. And al-Ghazāl was warned against (such conduct) and he became cautious. Then he refrained from visiting her for a long time; finally she questioned him about it and he told her of what he had been warned against; and she laughed and said: "In our religion we do not have that

(teaching), and we do not have jealousy; and our women (stay) with our men by the women's own choice. The woman stays with the man as long as she loves (him) and she leaves him when she hates (him). And the custom of the Heathen, before the religion of Rome has reached them, had been that no woman would forbid herself from any man unless a noble woman should befriend a man of low class. Then she would be reviled and her folks would keep him away from her." When al-Ghazāl heard her speech he was delighted with it and returned to his intimacy (with her). Tammām said: Al-Ghazāl in his middle age was handsome and in his youth was beautiful; this is why he was called al-Ghazāl<sup>52</sup>. He went to the land of the Heathen when he was on the verge of the age of fifty, and grey hair had already marked him. But he (still) was wholesome, lean and good to look at. The wife of the King asked him one day, and her name was Nūd,<sup>53</sup> about his age. And he said jokingly, to her: "Twenty years". And she said to the interpreter: "And who is of twenty years (of age) that has so much grey hair." And he said to the interpreter: "And what does she disapprove of in that? Has not she ever seen a pony born an albino?" And Nūd laughed and she admired his speech and al-Ghazāl said extemporaneously:<sup>54</sup>

52. I.e., the gazelle, which is proverbial for its beauty among the Arabs.

53. نود or Aud اود (also Aujr). See Seippel, pp. X-XI. A.R. Nykl suggests it to be Theuda. See Nykl, Hispano-Arabic Poetry, 24.

54. This is the translation of the poem by A.R. Nykl, ibid. 24-25.

My heart, thou hast undergone  
a painful love,

And struggled with it, the  
fiercest of all lions:

I fell in love with a Norman<sup>55</sup>  
lady fair,

She keeps the sun of beauty  
from ever setting,

In the farthest extreme of  
God's earth, where

The one who travels, no  
longer can travel on!

Oh Theuda,<sup>56</sup> thou  
breath of youth and charm,

A star of beauty rises from  
thy robe:

By my sire I swear, than  
thee I never saw

A sweeter or more pleasant  
person to my heart:

If I e'er said that my  
eyes had beheld

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55. Majūsi, i.e., Heathen.

56. Nūd in the original Arabic text.

One like thee, it would be  
a lie indeed!

She said: "I see his temples  
have grown grey" --

Jokingly, eliciting my jesting  
repartee,

In saying to her: "How does  
it come

That a foal at birth is  
quite grey?"

She laughed admiringly at  
what I had said:

I did so only that I might  
see her pleased!

If this poetry had been read to 'Umar ibn abi-  
Rabi'ah<sup>57</sup> or to Bashshār ibn Burd<sup>58</sup> or to 'Abbās ibn  
al-Aḥnaf or any other excellent poet who worked in this

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57. 'Umar ibn abi-Rabī'ah (ca. 719) was the prince of erotic poetry, "who made it his business to make love to the beautiful damsels pilgrimaging in Makkah and al-Madīnah as well as to such charming residents as the famous Sukaynah". See Hitti, Arab History, 250-51.
58. A blind Persian who was put to death in 783 on account of the vague charge of zindiqism (Zoroastrian or Manichaean secret views). Ibn Burd was the earliest exponent of a new style in Arabic poetry. Ibid., 405-406.

vein (of poetry), he would have been amazed by it. But its mention had to be forgotten, for it was Andalusian, otherwise it would not have been forgotten; and the like of it is not fair to be neglected. Have you seen a more beautiful (saying) than his saying: "She keeps the sun of beauty from ever setting" or the first stanza of this piece, or his description of the joking that occurred? Is not his description like pearls strung in order? Are not we dealt with unfairly and (are not we) wronged? . . . Let us now return to the poetry of al-Ghazāl. And it came to pass that when he sang the poem to her and the interpreter translated it to her, she laughed at it and she ordered him to dye (his hair); so, al-Ghazāl did. Soon after he went to her, with his hair dyed; and she praised his dyed (hair) and she made him like it. About this al-Ghazāl said:

Her flattering concerning my dyed hair  
 Has brought me back to my youth;  
 Lo, I regard grey hair and dye  
 As the sun covered with clouds,  
 It is hidden for a short while  
 then the gentle wind uncovers it again  
 And the cloud will go away for  
 no return.

Do not disapprove of the greyness  
 of the temples for

It is the rose of wisdom and  
intelligence;

And I have all that you love  
in youth,

And the smoothness of manners  
(I also have).

Then al-Ghazāl departed from them and the ambassadors accompanied him to Santiago of Compostela<sup>59</sup> with the letter of the King of the Heathen to its governor; and he stayed with the latter, being treated graciously, for two months, until their pilgrimage ended. Then he travelled to Castile<sup>60</sup> with the travellers and from it he went out to Toledo,<sup>61</sup> until he joined the court of the Sultan 'Abd-al-Rahmān after an absence of twenty months.

## IX

From the Book of

Al-Kāmil fi al-Tārīkh

Ibn al-Athīr (A.D. 1160-1234)

He said: And in the year 179/795 Hishām, the governor of

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59. Shant Ya 'qūb شنت يعقوب

60. Qishtālah قشتالة

61. Ṭulayṭalah طليطلة



Spain, sent a huge army under 'Abd-al-Malik ibn 'Abd-al-Wāhid ibn Mughith to Galicia. They advanced until they reached Astorga.<sup>62</sup> Alfonso, the King of the Galicians, had already assembled and mobilized (his army), and the King of the Basques<sup>63</sup> who were his neighbors had reinforced him, (so did those) who were next to them and the peoples of those regions, until he commanded a great multitude. Then 'Abd-al-Malik advanced against him but Alfonso retreated by reason of his fear of him. 'Abd-al Malik pursued them, killing any of them who were left behind. So, he subdued their country and penetrated far into it and he stayed in it plundering, killing and destroying and he put the women of Alfonso to disgrace and returned safely.

\*(The mention of the coming of the Heathen to the land of the Muslims in Spain). He said: ' In this year (meaning the year 230/844) the Heathen went out from the farthest regions of the land of Spain, into the sea, to the land of the Muslims in it (Spain). Their appearance was in Dhi al-Hijjah 229/843 near Lisbon. They stayed thirteen days during which (there were) battles between them and the Muslims. Then they proceeded to Cadiz, to Sidonia<sup>64</sup> and in it (there were) battles between them and the Muslims, then they advanced to Seville on the eighth of Muḥarram and landed twelve parasangs away from it; then many Muslims came out against them

62. Asturqah      استرقاة

63. Baskunas      بسكنس

64. Shadhūnah      شذونة

and they met, and the Muslims were defeated on the twelfth of Muḥarram and many of them were killed. Then they landed two miles from Seville; its people came out against them and fought them and the Muslims were defeated on the fourteenth day of Muḥarram and many of them were killed and captured, and the Heathen did not withhold their swords from a person or a beast. Then they entered the cultivated district of Seville and stayed in it one day and one night then they returned to their ships. Then the army of 'Abd-al-Raḥmān, the ruler of the land, caught up with them, with several generals (on the head of the army). The Heathen attacked them and the Muslims stood their ground and fought them, and seventy Heathen were killed; and they fled until they entered their ships and the Muslims halted their pursuit against them. And 'Abd-al-Raḥmān heard (of that) and he sent another army and they fought the Heathen severely and the Heathen retreated before them and the army pursued them on the second of Rabī' al-Awwal and fought them. Reinforcements came to the Muslims from every direction and they (the people) everywhere rose up to fight the Heathen. Then the Heathen came out and fought them and the Muslims were about to be defeated, but they stood their ground and many of them fought like men. The Heathen were defeated and about five-hundred men were killed and they (the Muslims) captured four ships from them; they took away whatever (there was) in them and then burned them. They remained (several) days being unable to

reach the Heathen because they were on their ships. Then the Heathen went to Niebla and they obtained captives. Then the Heathen landed on an island near Coria del Rio.<sup>65</sup> They landed on it and divided whatever booty they had. Then the Muslims were outraged and they entered upon them by way of the river, and killed two Heathen men. Then the Heathen departed and entered Sidonia by night and they obtained food and captives and they stayed two days. Then ships of 'Abd-al-Rahmān, the ruler of Spain, reached Seville. When the Heathen knew of them they went to Niebla and raided (it) and captured (people). Then they went to Oksonoba,<sup>66</sup> then they departed to Beja; then they transferred to the city of Lisbon. Then they departed and the land never heard of them and the people relaxed. Some Arab historians had mentioned that in 246/860 the Heathen had also attacked Seville; (the attack) was similar to this (i.e., the one we have just described) and I do not know whether it was the same one, except that they differed in dating it, or whether it was a different one. It is likely that they both were the same; but I have mentioned it there because in each one there is something that is not in the other.

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65. Qūrīs قوريس . See Seippel p. XI. Coria del Rio is on Guadalquivir.

66. Ukshūnubah اكشونبة

(The mention of the coming of the disbelievers in Spain to the land of the Muslims). He said: In this year (meaning the year 245/859) the Heathen went out from the land of Spain, in ships, to the land of the Muslims. Muḥammad ibn 'Abd-al-Raḥmān, the ruler of the Muslims, ordered the armies to go out and fight them. The ships of the Heathen arrived at Seville; then they entered Algeciras<sup>67</sup> and entered the (main) district of the town and burned the mosque. Then they crossed over and entered Nekur; then they returned to Spain. And the people of Todmir<sup>68</sup> fled and entered the fortress of Orihuela.<sup>69</sup> Then they advanced to the wall of the Franks, and they raided and did much looting and capturing, then they went away. Then the ships of Muḥammad met them and fought them, and they burned two ships of the disbelievers and took two other ships and plundered them. Upon that the disbelievers became angry and fought more vehemently and a group of Muslims were martyred. Then the ships of the Heathen left until they arrived at the province of Pamplona<sup>70</sup>

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67. The passage can be translated "...then they landed on the island, etc." but since their next target was Nekur on the North African coast, I deemed it more sensible that they had gone to Algeciras (Al-Jazīrah) as their departing point to North Africa.
68. A province on the east coast of Spain which occupied the territory of the later Kingdom of Murcia.
69. Ūriwālah اوريواله, on the Segura River which empties in the Mediterranean.
70. Banblūna بنبلونة. It was the capital of the Kingdom of Navarre.

and they captured its ruler Garcia<sup>71</sup> the Frank and he ransomed himself for 90,000 dīnars.

## X

From the Book of  
Baṣṭ al-Ard̄ fi Ṭuliha wa al-‘Urd̄  
 Ibn Sa‘īd (A.D. 1208)

He said: And to the north of England or somewhat to the north of Britain is the island of Ireland. It is inside the First Part (meaning the First Part of civilization behind the Regions) and the Second, a distance of about twelve days in length and its width in the middle is about four days. It is famous for the abundance of its civil wars. Its people were Heathen, then became Christians, following their neighbors. Much copper and tin is brought from it.

## XI

From the Book of  
Āthār al-Bilād wa-Akhbār al-‘Ibād  
 Al-Qazwīni  
 (A.D. 1203-4)

He said: Ireland is an island in the north and the west of the Sixth Region. Aḥmad ibn ‘Umar al-‘Udhri said: The

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71. Gharsiyah غرسية

Heathen have no capital in all the world but this island. Its circumference is 1000 miles and its people have the customs and dress of the Heathen. They wear mantles, the price of each of them is 100 dīnārs. As for their nobles, they wear mantles set with pearls. It has been related that they fish on its coasts the calves of the whale which is a very great fish. They fish for their calves with which they season (their bread). It has been mentioned that these young (fish) are born in September, and they are fished during the months of October, November, December and January. After that their meat toughens (and becomes) no longer edible. As for how they were fished, al-'Udhri has mentioned that the fishermen gather in ships and they have a big thin-bladed sword of iron which has sharp barbs and (there is) a great strong ring in that thin-bladed sword and in the ring (there is) a strong rope.<sup>72</sup> When they find a calf whale they clap their hands and make noise. Thus, the calf whale is entertained and approaches the ship with amusement. Then one of the sailors goes near it and scratches its forehead hard and the calf whale is delighted with that; then he puts the sword in the middle of its head, then he takes a strong hammer of iron and pounds on the sword with all his might three times. The first strike is not felt, but at the second and third blows the calf whale flops about violently and it may hit some

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72. This is the description of a harpoon.

ships with its tail, thus causing damage. It does not cease to flop until fatigue overwhelms it. Then the sailors of the ships cooperate in pulling it until they bring it to the coast. The mother of the calf whale may notice its flopping and follow them (the ships) but they have already prepared themselves with plenty of crushed garlic that they mix with the water. When it (the mother) smells the odor of the garlic it hates it and retreats backward. Then they cut the meat of the young whale and salt it. Its meat is as white as snow and its skin is as black as ink.

## XII

From the Book of

Al-Bayān al-Mughrib fi Akhbār al-Maghrīb

Ibn al-‘Idhārī

(A.D. 976)

He said: As for Asila, it is new and the reason for building it was that the Heathen came to its coast and claimed that they had in it goods and treasures (which) were left for them by the ancients who had lived on the coasts and who had been driven away from them by the tribes. When they landed to take their goods the Berbers gathered together to fight them. But they (The Heathen) said: "We have not come to fight but we have treasures in this place; go to one side until we dig them up and we shall share them with you".

The Berbers withdrew away from them when they heard that from them, and the Heathen dug up their places and brought out a plenty of mouldy millet. When the Berbers saw it they thought it was gold and they attacked them. The Rūm(?) fled to their ships and the Berbers got the millet; they regretted and tried to persuade the Heathen to come back and bring out the goods but they refused and said: "You have betrayed the promise", and they went away to Spain. At that time they appeared in Seville, according to the information that we have about Spain, and the people made Asila a gathering place and they came down to it from all around. A fair used to be held in it three times a year: In Ramaḍān, in the 'Awāshir and in 'Āshūrā'. Among what I have recorded and summarized from the book of Al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik of Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Qarawī (may Allāh have mercy upon him) is (the following): He said: One of the ancient cities on the coast of the Western Sea<sup>73</sup> is Asila. It is in a plain. It had been a city of the ancients and then the sea overwhelmed it; then it was rebuilt after that. The reason for building it was that the Heathen appeared in its harbor two times. As for the first time, they went to it claiming that they had goods and treasures and the Berbers gathered together to fight them as I have mentioned. As for their second appearance, (it

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73. The Atlantic.



was when) the wind blew them to it and many of their vessels were damaged there until that place came to be known as the Gate of the Heathen.

And he said: And in the year 177/793, the imām Hishām sent 'Abd-al-Malik ibn 'Abd-al-Wāḥid ibn Mughīth with the summer army to raid the land of the Rūm; and it was a famous and an important raid. He reached in it Frankland and besieged it and made breaches in its walls with ballistae and approached the land of the Heathen (closely) and wandered in the land of the enemy and stayed for months burning villages and destroying fortresses. He conquered the city of Narbonne<sup>74</sup> and it was a great victory; and the money brought in from the sale of the imām's fifth of the captives amounted to 45,000 (dīnars) of pure gold.

And he said: And in the year 179/795 the imām Hishām ibn 'Abd-al-Raḥmān sent 'Abd-al-Karīm ibn Mughīth with the summer army to raid as far as the city of Astorga inside Galicia. Then it reached him that Alfonso had mobilized his country and that he had been reinforced by the Basques<sup>75</sup> and the inhabitants of those regions, Heathen and others, who were next to him; and (he was also informed) that he had assembled them between Galicia and the Rock and that he had permitted the inhabitants of the plain to scatter in the high mountains of the coasts. Then 'Abd-al-Karīm sent forth Faraj ibn Kanānah with 4000 horses; then he followed him. He met

74. Arbūnah اربونة

75. Al-Bashkansh البشكنش

the enemies of Allāh and fought them until Allāh defeated them; and he killed their garrison and captured a group of them; then after the war had ended he ordered them to be killed.

And he said: And in it (meaning the year 229/843) the letter of Wahb-Allāh ibn Ḥazm, the governor of Lisbon, came, in which he mentioned that on the coast before him there appeared fifty-four ships of Heathen with fifty-four small boats. The prince 'Abd-al-Rahmān wrote to him and to the governors of the coasts to be on guard.

\*(The Heathen's entrance in Seville in 230/844). The Heathen appeared in eighty ships as if they filled the sea with partridge as well as they filled the hearts with grief and sorrow. They entered Lisbon, then advanced to Cadiz (and) to Sidonia. Then they advanced to Seville and occupied it; they attacked it until they forced themselves into it and eradicated its inhabitants by killing and capturing. They remained in it seven days giving its people the cup of death. The news was communicated to Prince 'Abd-al-Rahmān and he sent 'Īsa ibn Shuhayd al-Ḥājib at the head of the cavalry and the Muslims were attached to him like the attachment of the eye to the eyebrow.<sup>76</sup> 'Abdullah ibn Kulayb and ibn Wasīm and others led the cavalry and occupied Al-sharaf and he (al-Ḥājib?) wrote to the governors of the provinces to convoke the people; and they gathered in Cordova and Naṣr al-Fatā

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76. I.e., closely.

convoked them. And ship after ship came to the Heathen and they killed the men and captured the women and carried the children away. That lasted for thirteen days; (and it was mentioned in Bahjat al-Nafs and in the Book of Durar al-Qalā'id, seven days as it has been mentioned). Between them and the Muslims were many battles. Then they went to Captel<sup>77</sup> and stayed in it three days, and entered Coria<sup>78</sup>, twelve miles from Seville and killed a great number of Muslims; then at night they entered Ṭalyāṭah,<sup>79</sup> two miles from Seville and the next day they appeared in a place known as al-Fakhkhārīn (i.e., the potters); then they departed with their ships. And they fought with the Muslims and the Muslims were defeated and an uncountable number of them were killed. Then they (the Heathen) returned to their ships; then they departed to Sidonia and from it to Cadiz, and that was after Prince 'Abd-al-Raḥmān had dispatched his generals. Then (the two armies) resisted each other and the ballistae were erected against them (the Heathen) and reinforcements came to them (the Muslims) from Cordova, and the Heathen were defeated and about five-hundred dirty Heathen<sup>80</sup> were killed and four ships with all that was in them were captured, and ibn Wasīm ordered

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77. Qabṭīl قبطين ; to the south of Seville.

78. Qawrah قورة ; between Captel and Seville.

79. Ṭalyāṭah طليطة ; possibly Tharjana.

80. عنبر meaning ass, non-Arab, disbeliever.

them (the ships) to be burned and their booty was sold. Then a calamity befell them (the Heathen) in the village of Talyātāh on Tuesday, five (days) before the end of (the month of) Šafar of the (same) year, (where) great number of them being killed and thirty of their ships burned; a great number of the Heathen were hanged in Seville; some of them hanged on palm-tree trunks which were in it (Seville). The rest of them embarked on their ships and went to Niebla; then from there they went to Lisbon and they were no longer heard from. Their capture of Seville was on Wednesday, Muḥarram 14th, 230/844. Between their capture of Seville and the departure of their remnants there were forty-two days; and their prince was killed. So, Allāh has killed and caused them to perish, and destroyed their equipment and (reduced their) number. The wrath and pain came from Allāh as a punishment for what they had looted. When Allāh killed their prince and caused a multitude of them to perish, and defeated them, letters went out to the horizons (i.e., the far-away provinces) with news of this. And Prince 'Abd-al-Rahmān wrote to the Šanhajah (tribe) in Tangier, informing them of the doing of Allāh against the Heathen and of the wrath and death which Allāh had caused to descend upon them, and he sent to them the head of that prince and the heads of two-hundred of their soldiers.

And he said: And in it (meaning the year 245/859) the Heathen also went out to the coast of the Western Sea in sixty-two ships, and they found the sea guarded and the Muslim fleet

patrolling from the wall of Frankland to the wall of Galicia in the farthest west. Then two of the ships of the Heathen advanced, and the ships which were prepared met with them and they caught up with these two ships off the coast of the province of Beja, and they took them together with the gold, silver, people and equipment that were in them; and the rest of the ships of the Heathen sailed around the countryside until they reached the mouth of the river of Seville<sup>81</sup> in the sea. Then the prince dispatched the armies and the people rose from all sides; and their leader was 'Īsā ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ḥājib. The ships advanced from the mouth of the river of Seville until they reached Algeciras<sup>82</sup> and they conquered it and burned its mosque. Then they crossed to the shore and ravaged its country-sides, then they returned to the countryside of Spain. Then they reached the fortress of Orihuela, then they advanced to Frankland and they spent the winter there, capturing people and possessions. In it (Frankland) they conquered a province which they settled in, and it is associated with them (their name) until this day; then they departed for the countryside of the Sea of Spain. More than forty of their ships had already gone. And the ships of Prince Muḥammad met them and captured two of their ships in the region of Sidonia with great goods in them. The rest of the Heathen ships went away.

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81. I.e. Guadalquivir.

82. Al-Jazīrah al-Khadrā' الجزيرة الخضراء, meaning "The Green Island." The Heathen apparently did not enter the river of Guadalquivir at this point of development.

And he said: On the first of Rajab of the year 355/965, a letter came from Alcacer do Sal<sup>83</sup> to al-Mustansir bi-Allāh, reporting the appearance of the Heathen fleet in the Western Sea near that place. The people of all that coast were confused because of their known behavior, well remembered from their past comings to Spain. They were in twenty-eight ships. Then letters came one after the other from those coasts (reporting) news of them and that they (the Heathen) had harmed them (the coasts). Then they reached the plain of Lisbon and the Muslims came out to them and a fierce battle took place between them; (many) Muslims were martyred and (many) Heathen were killed. And the fleet of Seville came out and attacked them in the valley of Silves and destroyed several of their ships and rescued the Muslims who were in them, and they killed many of the disbelievers. Upon that they (the Heathen) ran away in defeat. The news of the Heathen continued to reach Cordova from the west coast all the time until Allāh Almighty sent them away.

And he said: And in it (meaning the year 355/965) Al-Ḥakam ibn Fuṭays ordered a fleet to be built in the river of Cordova<sup>84</sup> and to make the ships there on the model of the ships of the Heathen (may Allāh cause them to perish) as a precaution against their coming to it (Cordova).

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83. Qaṣr bani-Dānis قصر بني دانيس

84. Guadalquivir.

And he said: And at the beginning of Ramaḍān of it (meaning the year 360/970), the alarm came concerning the movement of Norman Heathen,<sup>85</sup> may Allāh curse them, and their appearance in the sea and their advance toward the western coasts of Spain as usual. The Sultan ordered the Admiral to go out to Almeria and to prepare the fleet for sailing from it to Seville. And he gathered all the fleets to sail to the west.

## XIII

From the Book of

Al-Mukhtaṣar fī Akhbār al-Bashar

Abu-al-Fidā

(A.D. 1273-1331)

He said: And in this year (meaning the year 230/844) the Heathen went out, in the farthest (regions) of Spain, by sea, to the land of the Muslims; and between them and the Muslims several battles took place in Spain, in which the Muslims were defeated, and they (the Heathen) went on killing the Muslims until they entered the cultivated region of Seville. And the army of 'Abd-al-Raḥmān the Umayyad, the ruler of Spain, encountered them. Then the Muslims gathered against them from all sides and they defeated the Heathen and took from them four ships (together) with all that was in them; and the Heathen fled in their ships to their country.

85. Al-Majūs al-Urmandiyyīn, المجوس اليرمانديين

## XIV

From the Book of

Nihāyat al-Arab fi Funūn al-Adab

Al-Nuwayri

(A.D. 1332)

(The mention of the coming out of the Heathen to the land of the Muslims in Spain). He said: And in the year 230/844, the Heathen in the farthest (regions) of the land of Spain, came out to the land of the Muslims. Their first appearance was in Dhi-al-Hijjah, 229/843 near Lisbon and they stayed in it thirteen days. During that time there were many battles between the two. Then they advanced to Cadiz; then to Sidonia (where) there was a great battle between them and the Muslims. Then they advanced toward Seville on the eighth day of Muharram and they landed twelve parasangs from it (Seville). The Muslims came out to them but the enemy defeated them and many of them (the Muslims) were killed and captured and the Heathen did not refrain from striking with sword either man or beast and they entered the inhabited district of Seville and stayed in it one day and one night. Then they returned to their ships. Then the army of 'Abd-al-Rahmān encountered them and the Heathen attacked. But the Muslims stood their ground and fought back, and seventy Heathen were killed and they were defeated; then they embarked on their ships and the Muslims refrained from (attacking) them.



Then 'Abd-al-Rahmān sent another army and the Heathen fought it fiercely and retreated. Then the army followed them on the second day of Rabī' al-Awwal and fought them. And reinforcements came to them (the Muslims) from every direction and they rose to fight the Heathen from all sides. Then the Heathen were defeated and about five-hundred of their men were killed; and they (the Muslims) took from them four ships. They took what was in them then they burned them. Then the Heathen went out to Niebla and took (some) captives and they landed on an island near Coria<sup>86</sup> and divided the booty which they had. But the Muslims came upon them by the river and killed two men. Then the Heathen departed and entered Sidonia and plundered food and captives; they stayed two days. Then the ships of 'Abd-al-Rahmān arrived at Seville; and when the Heathen knew of their arrival they went to Niebla and they attacked (it) and captured (women); then they went to Oskonoba; then they departed for Beja; then they returned to the city of Lisbon and they departed and there was no further news of them in the land and the people relaxed.

\*(The mention of the coming of the Heathen to the land of the Muslims in Spain). He said: In the year 245/859 the Heathen came out in ships to the land of Spain and they reached the city of Seville and occupied the cultivated land and burned the mosque; then they crossed to the coast,<sup>87</sup>

86. Qūrīs قوريس

87. عذوة meaning elevated spot, margin, brink (of a river). I translate it coast because it seems that they crossed the Strait of Gibraltar to North Africa first, and then came back to Spain.

then they returned to Spain. The people of Todmir fled and entered the fortress of Orihuela; then they advanced to the wall of Frankland and attacked (it) and obtained much plunder and many captives, then they departed. The ships of Prince Muḥammad met them and fought them and burned two Heathen ships and captured two ships, plundering whatever was in them. Upon that, the Heathen fought more vigorously and a group of Muslims were martyred. And the ships of the Heathen went away until they arrived at the province of Pamplona and they captured its ruler Garcia the Frank and he ransomed himself for 90,000 dīnārs.

## XV

From the Book of

Al-‘Ibar wa Dīwān al-Muḥtada wa al-Khabar

Ibn Khaldūn

(A.D. 1332-1406)

He said: Then in those years it came to pass that the Heathen came out into the regions of the land of Spain. They appeared in the year 227/841 on the coast of Lisbon. The war between them and its people continued for thirteen days. Then they advanced to Cadiz, then to Sidonia in which there was a battle between them and the Muslims. Then they advanced to Seville and landed near it and fought with its people in the middle of (the month of) Muḥarram in the year 228/842 and

defeated them and captured some of them and entered Seville and stayed in it one day and one night, then they returned to their ships. And armies came from Cordova with the generals, and the Heathen came down from their ships and the Muslims fought them and defeated them after a stern resistance. Then reinforcing armies came from Cordova and the Heathen fought them but the Muslims defeated them and captured some of their ships and burned them. Then the Heathen departed to Sidonia and stayed in it two days and plundered a bit. Then the ships of 'Abd-al-Rahmān arrived at Seville and the Heathen sailed to Niebla, and they attacked (it) and captured (women). Then they went away to Beja; then to the city of Lisbon; then they sailed from there and news from them ceased, and the land calmed down; that was in the year 230/844. Then 'Abd-al-Rahmān al-Awsat (the Middler)<sup>88</sup> came forth to repair what they had ruined of the country and enlarged its garrison. Some historians have mentioned that this incident of the Heathen (took place) in 246/860, and it probably was another one and Allāh knows better.

And he said: And in the year 245/859 the ships of the Heathen appeared and they landed at Seville and Algeciras and burned its mosque; then they returned to Tadmīr and entered the fortress of Orihuela and they went to the coasts of the Franks and pillaged them and (then) departed. Then the ships of Prince Muḥammad met them and fought them and captured two

88. To be identified as 'Abd-al-Rahmān II (822-52), later sur-named al-Awsat (the middler) for coming between 'Abd-al-Rahmān I and 'Abd-al-Rahmān III. See Hitti, Arab History, 514.

of their ships; a group of Muslims were martyred and the ships of the Heathen departed for Pamplona and captured its ruler Garcia and he ransomed himself for 70,000 dīnārs.

And he said: And in this year (meaning the year 354/965) the ships of the Heathen appeared in the Great Sea and they pillaged the plains of Lisbon. The people flared up and fought against them; so, they returned to their ships and al-Ḥakam dispatched the generals to guard the coasts and he ordered the Admiral, 'Abd-al-Rahmān ibn Rumāhis to hasten the movement of the fleet. Then the news came that the armies struck them grievously from all directions.

And he said: And after him (meaning al-Mu'tasim ibn Ṣāliḥ ibn Manṣūr) his brother Idrīs reigned. He layed the plans of the city of Nakūr on the brink of the valley but he did not finish it, and he died in the year 243/857. After him his son Sa'īd reigned, and he became powerful. He resided in the city of Timsāmān<sup>89</sup>, then he layed the plans of the city of Nakūr at the beginning of his reign and resided in it, which is known to the present as al-Mazimmah. It is between two rivers. One of them is Nakūr and it flows from the land of Kazannāya. Its springing place is the same as that of the valley of Warga.<sup>90</sup> The other is Ghīs. It springs from the land of the sons of Waryaghāl. The two rivers meet at

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89. تسمان, possibly Tlemcen.

90. Warghah ورغة; it empties in the Sebu River which in turn empties in the Atlantic, north of Rabat.

Akdāl, then they depart (from each other) towards the sea. Opposite to Nakūr in the mainland of Spain is Besliana.<sup>91</sup> The Heathen had raided Nakūr by their fleets in the year 244/858 and overcome it and made themselves free in it for eight (days). Then the Barānis(?) joined Sa'īd and they drove them out of it.

## XVI

From the Book of

Nafḥ al- Tīb

Al-Maqqari

(ca. A.D. 1627)

He said: And in the Ocean there are the seven Canary Islands and they are to the west of the city of Sela, could be seen in a sunny day when the weather is free from heavy vapors. In them there are seven idols unto the likeness of human beings, indicating that (there is) neither passing nor way after them. In it (the Ocean) northward are the Islands of the Blessed.<sup>92</sup> In them there are uncountable cities and villages. And a nation come out from them called the Heathen, and they are Christians. The first one of them (the islands) is Britain, which is in the middle of the Ocean Sea in the

91. Bizilyanah بزليانة east of Malaga.

92. Jazā'ir al-Sa'ādah جزائر السعادة the Islands of Happiness.

farthest north of the land of Spain. There are neither mountains nor springs in its, but they drink and cultivate by rain-water.

And he said: Ibn Ḥayyān and others had mentioned that the reign of al-Nāṣir<sup>93</sup> in Spain was of ultimate grandeur and sublimity. The Rūm<sup>94</sup> offered him presents and drew near him requesting to make truce with him and offer him great presents. All the nations of the kings of the Rūm, the Franks and the Heathen and the other nations who heard of him came to him, willingly submitting and departed pleased.

And he said: And ibn Ghālīb has mentioned in Farḥat al-Anfus when he praised Spain and its people that Ptolemy attributed to them, because Venus ruled their country, the tendency to good dress and food and cleanliness, purity and the love of pleasure, singing and producing tunes. And because of the rule of Mercury, (he attributed to them) the wisdom of management and keenness in pursuing knowledge and the love of wisdom, philosophy, justice and fairness. Ibn Ghālīb mentioned also what they were favored because of the management of Jupiter and Mars. Some have criticized him in that the fourth, fifth and sixth regions of Spain were on its northern coast; and that the seventh was in the islands of the Heathen; and that the Sun was for the fourth, and for

93. 'Abd-al-Rahmān III (912-61). For full discussion see Hitti, Arāb History, 520.

94. I.e., the Byzantines.

the fifth was Venus; for the sixth was mercury and for the seventh was the Moon; and Jupiter was for the second region and Mars for the third and they do not include Spain.

## Chapter Two

### Notices Concerning the Normans<sup>1</sup>

From the Book of

#### Al-Jughrāfiyah

The author said: And the land of Armenia Minor: It was mentioned that this land is never free from rain, neither at night nor in the day. If no rain falls in it, there still are weather disturbances and clouds such that the sun is hardly seen in it neither in the summer nor in the winter. Its chief food plants are the leguminous plants;<sup>2</sup> wheat and barley are rare in it; and from it comes the Armenian wormwood. It is the coldest country in the world; and it was called Armenia Minor because the Major (Armenia) is in the country of the Normans in the land of the Rūm.

And he said: And to the west of this country (meaning Rūmya) is the country of the Normans<sup>3</sup> and the people of this country are known as the Urmān<sup>4</sup> after the country of Armenia Major. The Muslim raids reached by sea from the land of

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1. Al-Urmān      الارمان

2. Al-Qaṭāni      القطاني

3. Al-Rumāniyyah      الرمانية

4.      الارمان; the writer is possibly confused between "Normans" and "Armenians".



Spain to this land and the commander of the fleet then was Muḥammad ibn Maymūn al-Murri during the period of the Almoravides. After him 'Īsa ibn Maymūn had raided it from the city of Seville. In this land there is the city of Nicotera,<sup>5</sup> which Muḥammad ibn Maymūn had taken, and the city of Augusta<sup>6</sup> which 'Īsa ibn Maymūn had taken. To the north of this land is the country of Urmānya Major. This country is the coldest country on earth and it is far into the north. It is a great country, in which live (some) sects of Rūm, and their origin is from the Khazar but the Rūm dominated them and they became Christians. This country has little plants but many cattle; and they know no fruit save apples which is their (only) fruit. And they have huge apples larger than are in (all) the lands of Allāh Almighty. They remain on their trees one or two years or more until the circumference of the apple becomes four spans or so. These apples are brought to Syria and Iraq and they probably reached Egypt, and they are known as the Armenian apples. They have plenty of nuts, almonds and chestnuts.<sup>7</sup> (They also have) the pistachios and the pines from which farshaq<sup>8</sup>

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5. Niqutrah      نقترة ; in Calabria.

6. Ghaztah      غزته (or Ghuztah); another variant given by Seipped is غياطة Ghayaṭah which is to be identified as Gaeta.

7. Al-qasṭall      القسطل ; Lat. Castanea; Gr. κάστανον.

8.              فرشق , possibly "varnish" or "turpentine".

is extracted, but the single seed is in the size of the ostrich egg. Within its rind there are round seeds the size of an almond that has hard rind, that can be broken like an almond. Inside it there is a moist core which tastes like butter and honey; and from nuts they make oil and with it they flavor (their food). The people of this country are a nation who have white faces, blond hair and blue eyes such that there is hardly any black apparent in their eyes. They enter the Caspian Sea and get from it the Rūmi pearls, the mother of pearl and the jarīb stone<sup>9</sup> which is a kind of ruby. Following the land of Nicotera is the land of Amalfi<sup>10</sup> who are a Frankish nation. They were called by this name after one of their cities called Mulfandah<sup>11</sup> which is one of the greatest Frankish cities and it is near the Rūmi Sea.<sup>12</sup> The dresses of Amalfi are made by them, which are beautiful dresses which they make of wool and they excell in dyeing them until they resemble silk dresses. They (the dresses) were associated with them and from them they are brought to the land of the Rūm and Spain. These dresses may be manufactured in many of the Frankish lands but never like those nor do they approach them. To the north of this city is the country of Flanders;<sup>13</sup> and in this country the Fustian dresses

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9. الجريب ; possibly "garnet"  
 10. Al-Malf الملف  
 11. ملفندة , probably Amalfi also.  
 12. I.e., the Mediterranean.  
 13. Iflandah افلندة

are manufactured, and they are dresses that are made of mallow. These dresses are figured like silk dresses except that they are all white like cotton. Many of them are made in the land of the Franks but they are not like the Flanders ones. To the north of this country is the beginning of the land of Galicia;<sup>14</sup> similarly the city of Barcelona is on the sea coast of the land of the Franks.

And he said: And the land of Galicia<sup>15</sup> is neighboring the land of Galicia<sup>16</sup> (sic) in the west and neighbors the land of the Normans<sup>17</sup> in the east. The land of Galicia<sup>18</sup> is the end of the land of Castile<sup>19</sup> in the north and its mention will come if Allāh Almighty wishes. And the land of the Rūm, from the land of Constantinople in the east to the land of Barcelona in the west, is fertile, having plenty of cultivation, cattle, fruits and vines, except those parts which are deep to the north like the land of Armenia, the land of the Normans,<sup>20</sup> the land of Galicia<sup>21</sup> and the land

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14. Jillīqyah جليقية ; the writer is probably confused with Galicia of the Iberian Peninsula, Galicia of Hungary, and Poland and Western Russia, Galatia of Asia Minor and possibly Calais (Calaisia) on the coast of France.
15. Jillīqyah جليقية
16. Ghillīsyah غليسية
17. Al-Urmān الارمان
18. Ghillīsyah غليسية
19. Qishtālah قشتالة
20. Al-Rumāniyyah الرمانية
21. Jillīqyah جليقية

of Galicia,<sup>22</sup> for agriculture in these lands is scarce and wines do not exist. They have plenty of fruits and dairy production and mallow.

And he said: And from this city (meaning Almeria) the Muslims invaded the city of Nicotera in the land of the Normans.<sup>23</sup>

And he said: And in this land (meaning Galicia) is the church which is exalted by the Rūm<sup>24</sup> (and) which they put on the same level with Jerusalem; and the Rūm in Syria and the people of Constantinople, Rūmiyyah, the Normans and other types of Rūm come to visit it as pilgrims.

And he said: And there is no sea that has more civilization than it (meaning the Rūmi Sea)<sup>25</sup> for its civilization is continuous along its two sides. First, (its shores) are inhabited in the south by Berbers from Tangiers to Tripolitania; and it is more than ninety days (in length). There its civilization ceases due to its ruggedness, and it becomes uninhabitable. In it there were Berber and Roman castles but today they are empty except for very few of them. There is a great city of the Rūm in it called Teuchira<sup>26</sup>

22. Ghillīsyah غليسية

23. Al-Urmān الارمان Calabria.

24. It is the church of Santiago de Compostela.

25. The Mediterranean.

26. Tukīrā تكيرا

but the Berbers took it from them; it is between Tripoli and Alexandria; and the length of this distance is eighteen days. This place is known as Ṭaraf Awthān (Place of Idols). Civilization is continuous from the city of Alexandria to the city of Tyre and Acre. The inhabitants of this place are a nation of Copts and they are in the province of Egypt. Civilization is also continuous from the city of Sfax of Syria<sup>27</sup> and Tripoli of Syria to the city of Ascalon, to the city of Suwaidah, to the city of Venice to the Gulf of Constantinople to the land of the Normans,<sup>28</sup> to the land of Amalfi, to the land of the Franks, to the beginning of the land of Spain, to Carthagena and Almeria to the island of Tarifa to Trafalgar which is opposite to Tangiers.

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27. Isfāqis al-Shām اسفاقس الشام

28. Al-Urmān الدرمان

Chapter Three

Notices Concerning the Varangians<sup>1</sup>

I

From the Book of

Al-Tafhīm li-Awā'il Ṣinā'at al-Tanjīm

Al-Bayrūnī

(A.D. 973-1048)

He said: As for the sea which is to the west of civilization on which coast is the country of Tangiers and Spain, it is known as the Ocean Sea, and the Greeks call it Okianōs. It is not penetratable but it is navigable close to its shore. It stretches from this country to the north parallel to the land of the Slavs. To the north of the Slavs a great gulf comes out of it, and it stretches to the neighborhood of the land of the Muslim Bulgars and they know it as the Sea of Varang, which is a nation on its coast. Then it bends after them eastward. Between its coast and the extremity of the land of the Turks (there are) unknown, waste and untraversed lands and mountains.

And he said: As for the Seventh Region, it does not have much civilization, but it is in the east, (composed of)

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1. Warank ورنك

thickets and mountains, inhabited by groups of Turks like the savages. It (the Seventh Region) passes through the mountains of Bāshkhar<sup>2</sup> and the borders of the Patzinaks<sup>3</sup> and the two countries of Suwār<sup>4</sup> and Bulgar, and the Rūs, the Slavs and the Bulgarians,<sup>5</sup> and it ends at the Ocean Sea. After this region (there are) few nations, such as the Īswā<sup>6</sup>, the Varangians, the Yūrah<sup>7</sup> and the like.

## II

From the Book of

Al-Tadhkirah fi al-Hay'ah

Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsi

(A.D. 1210)

He said: And in Al-Qadar al-Makshūf (it is mentioned that) civilization also has many seas, some of them are connected to the Ocean, such as that which is between Maghrib and Spain, and

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2. باشكارت ; possibly Bashkir.
  3. Al-Bajnākiyyah البجاكية
  4. Possibly Serbs or Sueves, but more likely the former because their location is in the immediate vicinity of the area under discussion.
  5. The reference here is possibly to Great Bulgaria.
  6. ايسوا ; possibly the Uzes people on the Dnieper River and the Ural River.
  7. يورة ; possibly the Uguri.

the Southern Sea which is connected to the eastern side from which four gulfs come out of it to the middle of civilization: The Gulf of Barbary and it is the nearest (of the gulfs) to Maghrib, the Red Gulf, the Persian Gulf and the Green Gulf.<sup>8</sup> Each one of them has length and width (which are) good (for navigation) like the Varangian Sea in the north. Some of them are not connected, like the Sea of Ṭabaristān<sup>9</sup> and the Lake of Khawarizm<sup>10</sup> and other torrents and marshes.

### III

From the Book of

Āthār al-Bilād wa Akhbār

al-'Iibād

Al-Qazwīni  
(A.D. 1283)

He said: Varang is a place on the edge of the Northern Sea, i.e., a gulf has come out from the Ocean Sea southward. The place on the edge of that gulf, which the gulf is named after, is called the Varangian Sea which is the most extreme place in the north. Cold is very severe in it, and the air is heavy and the snow is continuous. It is fit for neither plants nor animals. Scarcely anyone reaches it due to the severity of cold and darkness and snow; and Allāh knows better.

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8. Possibly the Arabian Sea  
9. I.e., the Caspian Sea.  
10. The Aral Sea.



## IV

From the Book of  
Al-Tuhfah al-Shāhiyyah

Al-Shīrāzi  
 (A.D. 1311)

He said: And know that the Western Ocean also, after passing Spain to the north, has a section which enters civilization. It stretches from the north of the land of the Slavs to the land of the Muslims of Bulgar. Its length from west to east is one-hundred parasangs and its width is thirty-three parasangs. In ancient books it is called the Sea of Maeotis, and now, the Sea of the Varang, who are a nation on its coast. They are tall and dark. When it passes by Varang eastward it stretches behind the lands of the Turks, in untraversed mountains and uninhabited lands, to the borders of the territory of China. And because (the lands) are uninhabited and because it (the sea) is not navigable, as it has been mentioned, its connection to the Eastern Ocean is not known.

And he said: As for the Danube<sup>11</sup> River, it is a great river comparable to a sea. It starts from 16° 30' then passes by the house of 16° 29' then 16° 28' then 17° 27', then 17° 26' and 18° 25' and 18° 24' and 19° 23' and 20° 23'

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11. Dunuwā دنوی

and  $21^{\circ} 23'$  and  $22^{\circ} 23'$  and  $23^{\circ} 22'$  and  $24^{\circ} 22'$  and  $25^{\circ} 21'$  and  $26^{\circ} 2'$  and  $27^{\circ} 21'$ , which is its mouth in the Sea of Trebizond.<sup>12</sup> Because it stretches from nearby the north-western strip, some thought that it was a branch of the sea of Rūm connected with the Western Ocean; and some (thought) that it comes out of the Varangian Sea. It has also been disputed whether it is possible to travel from the Rūs and the Slavs to Constantinople by land, i.e., without sailing in ships, or not. There is no reason for this dispute, because it is possible when the river freezes and it is not possible when it flows.

## V

From the Book of

Nukhbat al-Dahr

Al-Dimashqi

(A.D. 1256)

He said: there is not much of civilization in the Seventh Region, save thickets and mountains in the east, inhabited by groups of Turks like savages. It passes through the land of the Patzinaks, the heathen Bulgars, the Rūs, the Slavs, Bāshkhart, Barrā Swād, Varangians and Yūrah and

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12. Tarābzūn طرابزون, which may also be identified as Tiberiupolis (later Varna) on the west coast of the Black Sea.

its end is  $60^{\circ}$  and its longest daytime is 16 hours. Civilization stretches behind it only up to the borders of latitude  $66^{\circ} 15' 10''$  as we have said before. Then after that to  $90^{\circ}$  is waste, uninhabitable by the peoples of the Regions; and no familiar animals live in it due to the piling of snow on it and the abundance of mist and the remoteness of the sun from it. It is not impossible that it is inhabited by animals which we are not familiar with and which cannot depart from it. Likewise, the peoples of the Regions cannot inhabit it. No one ever entered it and went deep into it but died before coming out of it. It has been mentioned before that it was the region of darkness.

And he said: Then next to it (meaning Mt. Daran)<sup>13</sup> in length is the Mountain of Al-Bishārah and Al-Fath<sup>14</sup>, which separates between the west and the east of the peninsula of Spain, from the beginning of the peninsula to its end. From it there is a branch which is connected to the North Sea and to the Sea of Varang, the Slavs and the Croats.<sup>15</sup>

And he said: It is the Ocean Sea from which all other seas are supplied. No coast is known to it. It has

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13. جبل درن

14. Possibly the Guadarrama Mountains.

15. Al-Kilābiyyah الكلابية. I believe that this is a corruption of "Chrobatia".

(different) names in (different) places which the Greeks and the (other peoples) before them had given. Its name in the West is Okianōs and the Green Sea. In the South and the East (it is called) The Sea of Darkness, the Sea of Tar and the Frozen (Sea). In the extreme South (it is called) the Red Sea. And in the north and the West (it is called) the Sea of Darkness, the Sea of Varang and the Northern Ocean.

And he said: Then (the Ocean Sea) stretches with its coasts from the borders of the Sea of Cadiz to the limit of a branch out of it (which is) thin and long and circular (sic!). Its widest place is three days (journey). As for its length, it is not known. This branch is known as the Sea of England. Then the coasts of the Ocean stretches from the limits of this branch until it turns in the north westward. There is its greatest branch which is called the Varangian Sea. And Varang is the name of a people who do not speak intelligibly and who, almost, do not understand any speech; and they are the pure Slavs. This branch is the Northern Sea of Darkness. Nearby its coasts (there are) five islands whose mention will come. Then its coasts stretch to the north and the west until they enter the Region of Darkness; and there is no knowledge of what is there.

And he said: There have been differences about the arm that comes out of it (meaning from the Rūmi Sea) near Constantinople. Some people alleged that it comes to it from

the Sea of Pontus which is the Black Sea, and it is called the Sea of the Rūs, and that the Sea of the Rūs is connected with the Sea of the Varangians and the Sea of the Slavs. Some people alleged that this Rūmi Sea is the one which pours through this arm into the Sea of the Rūs, and that the Sea of the Rūs is not connected with the Sea of the Varangians, because of the continuity of the Great Land from Spain to beyond the river and to the desert of Kipchak. Traversing it is interrupted only by sweet-water rivers.

And he said: And sea-monsters exist abundantly in the Rūmi Sea, the Caspian Sea and the Varangian Sea. Likewise (they exist) near the coasts of the Ocean in Spain.

## VI

From the Book of

Taqwīm al-Buldān

Abu-al-Fidā  
(A D. 1273-1331)

He said: From this mentioned sea (meaning the Sea of Okianōs) many seas come out; among them are the Sea of the Rūm, the Sea of Bordeaux<sup>16</sup> and the Varangian Sea.

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16. Burdīl بردیل; the old name is "Burdegala" in the district of Burdegalensis. The reference here is almost obviously to the Bay of Bascay.

The mention of the Varangian Sea: I found no mention of this sea except in the classifications of Abu-al-Rayḥān al-Bayrūni and in Al-Tadhkirah of Al-Naṣīr. I quote here what al-Bayrūni has mentioned. He said: The Varangian Sea comes out of the Northern Ocean Sea to the south. It has a length and a width that are fit (for navigation). The Varangians are a nation on its coasts.

Chapter Four  
Notices Concerning the Rūs

I

From the Book of  
Al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik

Ibn Khurdādhbih

(ca. 912)

He said: As for the route of the Rūs merchants, who are a race of Slavs, they carry the skins of Khuzz<sup>1</sup> and the skins of black foxes and the swords from the farthest of Slavland to the Rūmi Sea, and the ruler of the Rūm tithes them. And if they travel (down) the Don<sup>2</sup>, which is the river of the Slavs, they pass by the gulf<sup>3</sup> of the Khazar city, and its ruler tithes them. Then they reach the Sea of Jurjān<sup>4</sup> and they go out on any of the shores that they like. The diameter of this sea is 500 parasangs. They may carry their merchandise from Jurjān on camels to Baghdad. The Slav servants are their translators, and they claim to be Christians, so they pay the poll-tax.

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1. جلور الخزر

2. تنيس Tanais

3. Seippel reads خليج مدينة الخزر, but I suggest that it should be read خليج مدينة الخزر, where خليج means "gulf".

4. I.e., the Caspian Sea, or more likely the southern part of the Caspian Sea.

## II

From the Book of

Al-Buldān

Al-Ya'qūbi

(A.D. 891)

He said: To the west of the city which is called Algeciras (there is) a city called Seville, on a great river which is the river of Cordova.<sup>5</sup> The Heathen, who are called the Rūs, had entered it in 229/843 and took captives, plundered, burned and killed.

## III

From the Book of

Al-A'lāq al-Nafīṣah

Ibn Rusteh

(A.D. 903)

He said: The Bulgar are bordering the land of Bardās and they are on the bank of the river which empties in the Caspian Sea which is called Itil<sup>6</sup>; they are between the Khazar and the Slavs. Their king is called al-Mush and he adopted Islam. Their lands are gardens and forests and they inhabit them. They are three types: one type is the

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5. I.e., Guadalquivir.

6. واتل; i.e., the Volga River.



Baršūla<sup>7</sup>; the other type are the Asghal<sup>8</sup> and the third are the Bulgars. They all live in one place; and the Khazar trade and deal with them. Likewise, the Rūs bring their trade to them. And all those who are on the two banks of the river frequent them with their merchandise, such as the mustella-zibelina, ermines, the minever and others.

And he said: As for the Rūs, they are in an island surrounded by a lake. The island in which they are has three days (journey) of forests and gardens. It is disease-ridden and damp, if a man puts his foot on the ground it quakes due to its dampness. They have a king called Khaqān Rūs. They raid the Slavs: They sail in ships until they reach them and (then) they capture them; then they go to the Khazar<sup>9</sup> and Bulgar to sell them. They have no plantations, but they eat from whatever they carry from the land of the Slavs. If a baby is born to a man he presents to the baby a drawn sword and places it in his arms saying: "I shall not bequeath thee fortune, and there is nothing for thee except that thou obtainest for thyself with this thy sword." They have no estates, villages or plantations, but their profession is trading in mustella-zibelina and the minevers and other furs, (which) they sell to their customers taking

7. Possibly the city of Prislav (Peristhlaba) on the Danube delta.

8. Possibly Eskistambol (Peristhlaba magna).

9. خزران Khazrān.

the prices in money<sup>10</sup> which they bind in their bags. Their dresses are clean. Their men wear golden bracelets; and they are kind to their slaves. They are refined in their dressing because they are merchants. They have many cities; and they spend lavishly on themselves, and they are generous to their guests and to the strangers who take refuge with them and to whoever is related to them and they do not allow any one to wrong them or transgress against them; and they assist them and defend them against anyone who tries to hurt them or transgress against them. They have the Sulaymani swords. And if one group is provoked they all go out (for war) and never disperse but become (like) one hand against their enemy until they overcome them. If one of them brings a suit against another, he takes him to the king to try him, and they wrangle. If (the king) gives his judgment, that is what he wants. But if they do not agree to his decision (the king) commands them to be judged by their swords, and the victory goes to the more sharp of the two swords. Then the two factions rise with their arms and fight and the one that overcomes the other can do whatever it wants with the adversary. They have learned men who rule upon their king like gods for them. They command them (to seek favor) with their Creator with whatever they want of women, men and horses. And if the

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10. الجمال الصامت lit. The silent goods.

learned men pass a judgment they find no way but to fulfil their orders. Then the learned man takes the human being or the beast and lays a rope around his neck then hangs him on a wooden (post) until he dies and then he says: "This is a sacrifice for God". They acquire manhood and courage. If they go out fighting a nation they do not depart from them until they kill them and allow (taking) their women and enslave them. They have (good) physiques, sight and courage. They do not attack on the back (of horses), but their raids and dealings are on ships. They have trousers each one of them is made of one-hundred yards. When one wears them he collects them on his knees and binds them there. The one from them does not go out to finish his business alone, but accompanied by three persons from among his comrades and each one of them is carrying a sword due to their lack of trust and their treachery. If a man has some possession, his brother or friend who is with him (may) be covetous enough to kill him and take it away from him. If a great man dies they dig a grave for him like a huge house and they put him in it, then they put with him his clothes and golden bracelet which he used to wear, and a plenty of food and jars of drink and also money. They put with him in the grave his wife, whom he loved, while she is still alive, then the door of the grave is shut on her, so she dies there.

## IV

From the Book of

Naẓm al-Jawhar

Ibn al-Biṭrīq

(A.D. 938)

He said: And among them (meaning the seventy-two men who gathered to build the Tower of Babel) there were fifteen men from the descendents of Japheth; and they lived to the extreme north of the Tigris. And among them are the Turks, the Patzinaks, the Ghuzz<sup>11</sup>, the Tibet, Gog Magog, the Khazars, the Alans, the Abkhasians, the Ṣanariyyans, Khazrān, Armenia Major, Armenia Minor, Jurzān<sup>12</sup>, Antioch, Chaldeans, Paphlagonia<sup>13</sup>, Capadocia, Kharshanah<sup>14</sup>, the Greeks, the Rūm, the Byzantines, the Rūs, the Dailem, the Bulgars, the Slavs, the Lombards<sup>15</sup>, the Franks, the Basques<sup>16</sup> and Spain.

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11. الطغزغز , Al-Ṭughuzghuz.

12. جُرْزَان , possibly Jurjān, on the southeast side of the Caspian Sea; (Georgia).

13. افلاغونية Aflāghūniyyāh.

14. خرشنة ; possibly Cherson, in the Crimea.

15. الانكبادرة Al-Ankabardah.

16. الجاسقس , Al-Jāsqas: Identified as "The Basques" on the basis of being mentioned in the text between the Franks and Spain.

## V

From the Book of  
Masālik al-Mamālik

Al-Iṣṭakhri

(A.D. 934)

He said: As for the Kingdom of the Rūm, the territories of the Slavs and those who neighbor them such as Rūs, Sarīr<sup>17</sup>, Alans, Armenians and whoever believe in Christianity, are included in them.

And he said: As for the Kingdom of Islam, on the east (it is bordered) by India and the Persian Sea, on the west by the Kingdom of the Rūm and whatever is connected to it such as the lands of the Armenians, Arrān<sup>18</sup>, Sarīr, Khazar, the Rūs, the Bulgars, the Slavs and a group of Turks. To the north is the Kingdom of China and whatever is connected to it from the country of the Turks. To the south of Islam is the Persian Sea. As for the Kingdom of the Rūm, on its east is the Islamic land; on the west and the south is the Ocean Sea; to the north is China because we have annexed

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17. السريير , on the western coast of the Caspian Sea.
18. الران , Al-Rān: They are definitely to be identified as Arran (or Erran), east of Armenia. The name pronounced in Arabic as "Ar-Rān" even if the definite article al is prefixed to Rān. The writer inserted the definite article because he probably thought that the name is Rān and the syllable "Ar" stands for the definite article "al", pronounced "Ar" because the R of "Rān" is a "sun letter".

(into Islam) whatever nations that are between the Turks and the land of the Rūm such as the Slavs and other nations up to the land of the Rūm.

And he said: And the land of the Slavs is wide and long, about two months. Outer Bulgar is a small territory which does not have many provinces. Its fame is due to its being a port for these kingdoms. The Rūs is a nation near the Bulgars, between them and the Slavs. A group of Turks were cut off from their own land and became between the Khazar and Rūm, and they are called Patzinaks. Their place was not theirs from ancient times but they assumed and conquered it. As for the Khazar, it is a name for a race of people. The country is called Itil; and it has been named after the river that flows through it to the Caspian Sea. This country is not very well off and does not have extended domain. It is a land between the Caspian Sea, the Sarīr, the Rus and the Ghuzz.

And he said: As for the Khazar, it is the name of the region. Its capital is called Itil and this is the name of the river which flows to it (the Khazar region) from the Rūs and the Bulgar. Itil (city) is of two sections: One section is on the western (bank) of this river which is called Itil and it is the largest of the two (sections); the (other) section is on its eastern (bank) ---. This country has no villages, but their plantations are spread. They go out in the summer time in the fields to plant some

twenty parasangs. They gather some of (the crops) on the river and some on the (edge) of the desert. They transport their crops by carriages and by the river. Most of their food is rice and fish. And whatever is carried to them of honey and wax is carried to them from the region of the Rūs and the Bulgars. Likewise, the furry skins which are carried to the far away places do not exist except in those rivers which are in the region of the Bulgar, the Rūs and Kiev<sup>19</sup> and do not exist in any of the regions which I know.

And he said: As for the River Itil, I was informed that it goes out near Kirghiz and flows between Kīmākiyyah<sup>20</sup> and the Ghuzz, and it is the border line between Kīmākiyyah and Ghuzz. Then it goes westward through Bulgar and comes back to the east until it passes by the Rūs then it passes by Bulgar and then by the Burtas<sup>21</sup> until it empties in the Caspian Sea.

And he said: Burtas is a nation which is neighboring the Khazar and no other nation (exists) between them and the Khazar. They are a nation which is spreading over the valley of Itil. Burtas is the name of the nation (as well). Similarly, Rūs, Khazar, Sarīr are names of kingdoms not of cities or peoples.

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19. كويابه Kuyābah

20. الكيماكية Al-Kīmākiyyah; possibly the Cumans who settled around the Dnieper Valley.

21. برطاس, in the northern Don valley.

And he said: The language of the Bulgar is like the language of the Khazar. The Burtas have another language. Similarly, the language of the Rūs is different from the language of the Khazars and Burtas.

And he said: The Rūs are three kinds. One kind are near the Bulgar and their King dwells in a city called Kiev, which is bigger than Bulgar. Another type who are farther than them are called the Ṣulāwīyyah<sup>22</sup>; another type are called the Artinians<sup>23</sup> whose King dwells in Arta. The people reach to Kiev with their merchandise. As for Arta, it has never been mentioned that any stranger has entered it, because they kill any stranger who steps on their soil. They, however, come down, by water, trading and never give information about their affairs and trade, and they do not let anyone accompany them or enter their land. From Arta come the black mustilla zibelina and (also) lead.

The Rūs are a nation who burn themselves when they die. With their rich people, the young female slaves are burned with pleasure. Some of them shave their beards; some twist them like forelocks. Their dress is (composed of) short tunics. The dress of the Khazar, Bulgar, and Patzinaks is the complete tunic. Those Rūs trade with the Khazar, the

22. الصلوية; possibly the inhabitants of Sulia on the Adriatic. For other suggestions see V. Minorsky, Hudūd al-Ālam (Oxford, 1937), 433-4.

23. الارثانية, Al-Arthāniyyah, who are almost certainly to be identified with Artinia (Aetolia). For other conjecture see Minorsky, Hudud al-Ālam, 434.



Rūm and Great Bulgaria. They border the Rūm to the latter's north. They are abundant in number. Their strength is such that they have imposed tribute upon their neighbors of Rūm. The people of Bulgaria Interior are Christians.

And he said: And in this sea (meaning the Caspian Sea) there is no inhabited island (in which) there is civilization as we mentioned about the two seas of Persia and the Rūm. But, nevertheless, there are in it islands in which there are thickets and waters and trees. There are no men on them. One of them is the island of Siyākūh<sup>24</sup> which is a big island in which there are springs, trees and thickets. And in it there are wild beasts. And in it (the Caspian Sea) there is an island like the shoe of the ass<sup>25</sup>: It is big and in it there are thickets, trees and waters. Madder comes from it and it comes to it from the region of Bardha'ah<sup>26</sup> and from it they carry the madder. They also carry to it the beasts by ships from the region of Bardha'ah and the rest of the provinces, and there they are pastured until they get fat. And (there is) an island known as the island of Russia and (other) small islands.

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24. **سياكوه**: It is certainly to be identified with the territory of Siabkuh, between the Caspian Sea and the Aral Sea.
25. Possibly the peninsula on which the city of Bakū is situated.
26. **برذعة**: It is to be identified with Patrav (modern Tertersk). It was the capital of the province of Albania, in the eastern Caucasus. See N.K. Chadwick, The Beginnings of Russian History (Cambridge, 1946), 54-55.

## VI

From the Book of

Murūj al-Dhahab

Al-Mas'ūdi

(A.D. 946)

He said: And after him (meaning Enoch<sup>27</sup>) Methuselah<sup>28</sup> son of Enoch arose and he built the land, and light was in his forehead. And he begot children; and people spoke much about his sons. The Bulgar, Rūs, and Slavs are his descendents.

And he said: As for the Sea of Pontus, it stretches from the land of Lazica<sup>29</sup> to Constantinople. Its length is 1,100 miles and its width in the main is 300 miles. The great river which is known as Tanais<sup>30</sup> empties in it, and we have already mentioned it before. The beginning of this river is in the north and on it there live many of the sons of Japheth, the son of Noah. It comes out from a great lake in the north (and) from springs and mountains. Its course on the surface of the earth is about 300 parasangs through series of tribes of the sons of Japheth. It then enters the sea of Maeotis, as it has been claimed by the well informed people, until it empties in the Sea of Pontus. This river is

27. חנוך (Heb. חֲנֹךְ); Gen. 5:21.

28. מתושלח (Heb. מֵתוּשֶׁלַח); ibid.

29. لاذقة (Lādhīqah); on the eastern coast of the Black Sea.

30. طنائس; i.e., the Don River.

a great river. In it (there are many) kinds of stones, herbs and minerals; some early philosophers have mentioned it. Some people call the Sea of Maeotis a lake, fixing its length as 300 miles and its width as 100 miles. The Gulf of Constantinople springs out from it, which empties in the Sea of the Rūm whose length is about 350 miles. Constantinople and numerous tribes are on it from its beginning to its end. Constantinople is on the western coast of this Gulf and it is connected with the lands of Rūmia and Spain and others. Therefore, it must be, according to the sayings of those astrologers and others who preceded (them), that the Sea of Bulgar<sup>31</sup> and Rūs, and Bajnā,<sup>32</sup> Patzinaks and Bajghard<sup>33</sup> who are three types of Turks, is the Sea of Pontus. The mention of those nations will come later in this book if Allāh Almighty wishes.

And he said: And (some) people made a mistake in claiming that the Caspian Sea is connected with the Sea of Maeotis. But I have never seen any one of the merchants who entered the land of the Khazar and sailed in the Sea of Maeotis and Pontus to Russia and Bulgaria who claimed that the Caspian Sea is connected to any of these seas or any of their waters or gulfs except from the Khazar River<sup>34</sup>, and we shall mention that when we mention the Kipchak Mountains<sup>35</sup>

31. البرغر , Al-Burgar.

32. بجنى , the reference is probably to Bitzina, a city on the west coast of the Black Sea.

33. بيجرد , possibly Belgrade or Sarkel which was a "white city".

34. The Volga River.

35. جبل القبق , Jabal al-Qabaq.

and the city of Bāb al-Abwāb<sup>36</sup> and the Khazar Kingdom, and how the Rūs entered the Caspian Sea by ships, and that was after the year 300/912. I have found most of the early and late (writers) who have described the seas mention in their books that the Gulf of Constantinople, which extends from Maeotis, is connected with the Caspian Sea; and I do not know how that could have been nor why have they said it: Was it from experience or from deduction and measurement? or whether they were mistaken that the Rūs and their neighbors on this sea were the Khazars? I have sailed in it from Ābuskūn, which is on the coast of Jurjān, to the land of Tabaristan and others; and I have never left any of the merchants whom I have seen who have any minimum of knowledge, nor any other sailors, without asking them about that. All of them told me that there was no way to it except via the Khazar River where the ships of the Rūs enter it. Then the peoples of Azerbaijan, Arrān, Beilakān<sup>37</sup> from the land of Bardha'ah and elsewhere, and (likewise), the Dailem, Jīlān<sup>38</sup>, Jurjān and Tabaristān rose against them because they did not experience in the past that an enemy had ever come out to them from it; and that was not even known in ancient times. Whatever we have mentioned of countries, nations and lands are

36. باب الأبواب: A city on the eastern coast of the Caspian Sea, almost on the same site of the modern city of Derbent.

37. البيلقان, Al-Baylaqān: A city between the Kura River and the Aras River.

38. الجیل (Al-Jīl): Almost certainly to be identified as the people of Jīlan, on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea.

famous and well known to them (the writers). That was in the days of Ibn abi-al-sāj.

And he said: And Itil in which the King of the Khazars dwells at this time is in three sections, divided by a great river which comes down from the highlands in the land of the Turks; a branch comes out of it towards the land of the Bulgar and empties in the Sea of Maeotis. This city is (composed of) two sections and an island in the middle of the river where there is the house of government. The palace of the King is on the end of this island. It has a bridge of ships (between it) and one of the city's two sections. In this city there are Muslims, Christians, Jews and Heathen. As for the Jews, they are the King and his companions; the Khazars are of their race. The King of the Khazar adopted Judaism during the Caliphate of al-Rashīd<sup>39</sup> and he gathered around him many Jews who came to him from the different Muslim countries and from the land of the Rūm, because the King of the Rūm at this time, which is the year 332/943 is Romanus<sup>40</sup> who has coerced the Jews in his domion to become Christians. We shall mention later in this book the accounts

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39. I.e., the Abbasid Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (786-809).

40. **ارمنوس** (Armanūs): He is Romanus I Lecapenus (919-944) of the Macedonian Dynasty. There is, however, an implication in the text that he was a contemporary of Harūn al-Rashīd. The text, therefore, may be interpreted as saying that the "office of the King" had gathered the Jews from different lands and not necessarily the same king who adopted Judaism in the time of al-Rashīd.

of the kings of the Rūm and their number and the account of this king and whoever shared his kingdom with him at this particular time. Many Jews fled from the land of the Rūm to the land of the Khazar as we have described. The account of the adoption of Judaism by the King of the Khazar has a separate account which has been related in our previous books. As for the Heathen in his land, they are (of different) races. Some of them are the Slavs and the Rūs and they live in one side of this city (Itil); they burn their dead with beasts, tools and jewelry. If a man dies his woman is burned with him alive. But if the woman dies the man is not burned. If a bachelor dies he is then married after his death. The women desire to burn themselves, for they believe that they would enter Paradise. This is an Indian custom as we have mentioned before. But the Indians are not in the habit of burning the woman with her husband unless the woman wishes that.

And he said: And in the court of the kingdom of the Khazar there are seven judges: two for the Muslims; two for the Khazars who make judgments according to the Torah; two for the Christians who are in it (the Kingdom) who make judgments according to the Gospel; and one for the Slavs and the Rūs and the other Heathen who makes judgments according to the Heathen custom and deductions. When something arises of which they have no knowledge, (which may be) of great gravity, they meet with the Muslim judges and accept

them as judges and accept whatever the Muslim law imposes. None of the Oriental kings in this region has mercenary soldiers except the king of the Khazar. Every Muslim in those lands knows the names of those nations: the Ursiyyah<sup>41</sup>, the Rūs, and the Slavs whom we have mentioned that they were the King's Heathen soldiers and slaves. In his land there are, beside the Ursiyyah, many Muslim merchants and craftsmen who came to his land because of his justice and security.

And he said: In the upper Khazar valley there is a mouth of a river connected to a gulf of the Pontus Sea, which is the Sea of the Rūs. Nobody except them (the Rūs) sail in it; they are on one of its coasts. They are a great nation who do not submit to a king or a law. Some of their merchants frequent the city of the Bulgar king. An abundance of silver exists in the land of the Rūs; it is as abundant as the silver in the mountain of Banjahīr.<sup>42</sup>

And he said: And the Rūs are many nations of many kinds. Some of them are a race called the Northmen<sup>43</sup> and they are the majority. They frequent, as traders, Spain, Rūmia,

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41. **الدرسية**; possibly the Uliches people between the Dnieper and the Bug rivers.

42. **بجيز**; other variants given by Seippel are **بجيز** (Yatajhīz) and **مكير** (Mahjīr). On the silver mine of Banjahīr, see Sture Bolin, "Mohammed, Charlemagne and Ruric" in The Scandinavian Economic History Review, Vol. I, No. 1 (Stockholm, 1953), 5-39.

43. **الوردانة** (al-Lawda'ānah). I fix the name as "Northmen" in accordance with Seippel's argument that this name is a corruption of **الأرمانه**. I, however, suggest (continued)

Constantinople, and the Khazar. And it came to pass, that after the year 300/912 about 500 of their ships with 100 souls in each ship came and entered the Gulf of Pontus which is connected with the Khazar River. The Khazar king had well equipped men, with strong weapons who were to repel anyone who would come down from that sea or that area where a branch of the Khazar River is connected with the Sea of Pontus; that was because in the Valley of the Turks, the Ghuzz come to that land and spend the winter there. The water which is connected from the Khazar River to the Gulf of Pontus may freeze and the Ghuzz pass on it with their horses. It is a great body of water so that it does not break down under them, due to its great solidity; thus they pass to the land of the Khazar. The king of the Khazar would come out to them, if his equipped men there were unable to repel them, forbidding them from crossing that body of ice, thus, he would save his kingdom. But in the summer, the Turks have no way of passing over on it. So, when the ships of the Rūs came to his men, who were stationed on the mouth of the Gulf, they negotiated with the king of the Khazar to pass through his country and come down in his river to enter the Caspian

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43. that the name possibly designated the Lithuanians. In the 10th century the Lithuanians were known as Litva; their branch, the Letts, called themselves Latvis. The Russian chronicles called them Letygola, an abbreviation of Latvin-galas, "the confines of Lithuania". See Encyclopaedia Britannica on the Lithuanians.



Sea, which is the Sea of Jurjān (Georgia) and Tabaristān and the other non-Arab<sup>44</sup> countries, as we have mentioned, on the condition that they would give him half of whatever they should gain there from the nations on that sea. And he allowed them to do that. They entered the Gulf and reached the mouth of the river and went up in that branch of water until they reached to the Khazar River, then they came by it to the city of Itil. They passed through it and they reached the mouth of the river on the Caspian Sea, and from the mouth of the river to the city of Itil... And it is a great river, with much water. The ships of the Rūs spread in this sea and sent their contingents to the Jīl, Dailem and the land of Tabaristān and Ābuskūn which is on the coast of Jurjān and the country of naphtha, and toward Azerbaijan, for (the distance) from the city of Arbadīl in Azerbaijan to this sea is about three days (journey). The Rūs set themselves free with women and children, and they looted, raided, destroyed and burned. The nations around this sea rose up because they were not accustomed to having any enemy ever come to them by sea, except the ships of merchants and fishermen who frequented it. They (the Rūs) had wars with the Jīl and the Dailem, and with a general of Ibn abi al-Sāj. And they ended up on the coast of the naphtha in the kingdom of Shirwān<sup>45</sup> which is

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44. **الأعاجم** (al-A'ājim),, a term designating the Persians and all non-Arabic speaking people in general.

45. On the west coast of the Caspian Sea.

known as Baku. The Rūs retreated, after their return from their raids, to islands near the naphtha, a few miles from it. The king of Shirwān at that time was 'Ali ibn al-Haytham. And the people prepared themselves and boarded the boats and the merchantships and sailed towards those islands. The Rūs fought them and thousands of the Muslims were killed and drowned. The Rūs stayed many months in this sea, as we have described. None of the nations around the sea had any means to reach them. And the people made preparations (to repel them), being cautious about them, because around the sea there are many peoples. When they had enough booty and grew bored with what they were doing, they went to the mouth of the Khazar River<sup>46</sup>, where it flows into the sea and negotiated with the King of the Khazars and carried to him the wealth and the booty according to the condition he had laid on them. And the King of the Khazars has no ships and his men are not used to them (i.e., the ships), and except for that he would be a great menace to the Muslims. The Ursiyyah and the Muslims in the land of the Khazar knew about them (the Rūs) and they said to the king of the Khazars, "Leave those people to us, for they raided the land of our brother Muslims and shed blood and captured the women and children". He could not forbid them, but he sent to the Rūs informing them

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46. I.e., the Volga River.

of the plan of the Muslims to fight them. And the Muslims formed an encampment and marched down the river. When they came face to face, the Rūs abandoned their ships and met the Muslims; and with the Muslims (there were) some of the Christians who lived in the city of Itil. The Muslims were about 15,000 with horses and equipment. The fighting continued between them for three days, and Allāh made the Muslims overwhelm them and the sword took them. Some were killed, some drowned, and about 5,000 of them escaped and embarked for that side which is beyond the land of Burtas, and they abandoned their ships and stuck to the land. Some of them were killed by the people of Burtas, and some reached the land of the Muslim Bulgars who killed them. Those who were counted to have been killed by the Muslims on the coast of the Caspian were about 30,000. Since that year the Rūs have never returned to those regions.

Al-Mas'ūdī said: We have mentioned this story to refute those who assert that the Caspian is connected with the Sea of Maeotis and the Gulf of Constantinople, for if there was a connection between this sea and the Gulf of Constantinople from the side of the Sea of Maeotis and Pontus, the Rūs would have come through it for that was their sea as we have mentioned. There is no difference (in opinion) among the nations who are neighboring this sea, whom we mentioned, in that the sea of the Persians has no gulf which is connected to

any other sea because it is a small sea and so can be well known. That which we have mentioned about the ships of the Rūs is well known in those lands among the nations and the year is known and it was after 300/912, but I cannot recall it. Perhaps, whoever mentioned that the Caspian Sea is connected with the Gulf of Constantinople has confused the Caspian with the Sea of Maeotis and Pontus, which is the sea of the Bulgar and the Rūs; and Allāh knows better about that.

And he said: And the length of this gulf (meaning the Gulf of Constantinople) is 350 miles and it was said that it was less than that; its width at the place where the Sea of Maeotis flows into it is about 10 miles. And there are huge tribes and a city for the Rūm called Mesene<sup>47</sup> which bar the Rūs ships and others that come from that sea. This gulf narrows down near Constantinople and its width, which is the passing point from the eastern side to the western side in which is Constantinople, becomes about four miles.

And he said: The third type of emerald is known as the Western<sup>48</sup> (emerald). By this name (by referring it to the West) they mean that the kings of the West: Franks,

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47. مسناه (Masnāh); a city in Thrace.

48. المغربى (Al-Maghribi).

Lombards<sup>49</sup>, Spaniards, Galicians, Basques<sup>50</sup>, Slavs and Rūs (most of these nations touch Jarbi<sup>51</sup>, which is between the east and the west, as we described when mentioning the lands of the sons of Japheth, son of Noah) are competing for this type of emerald just as the kinds of India and China are competing for the type called "the maritime emerald".

And he said: (And we have mentioned) that in the land of the Khazars there are people from the Slavs and the Rūs and they burn themselves with fire.

## VII

From the Book of  
Al-Tanbīh wa al-Ishrāf

Al-Mas'ūdi

(A.D. 947)

He said: And the fourth sea is the Sea of Pontus, and it is the sea of the Bulgars and the Rūs and other nations. It extends from the north from about the city which is called

49. النوكبرد (Al-Nokbard).

50. وسكونس (Wiscons).

51. جري (Sry. <sup>جُرَيْب</sup> or <sup>جُرَيْب</sup>); it seems to be a western route, probably Scandinavia or western Germany.

Lādhiqah (Lazians)<sup>52</sup>, which is beyond Constantinople. Its length is 1300 miles and its width is 300 miles. It is connected to the Lake of Maeotis which has a length of 300 miles and a width of 100 miles. It is on the edge of civilization in the north and some of it is under the North Pole; there is a city (or land) near it (the Pole) after which there is no civilization and it (that land) is called Thule.

And he said: And the sixth margin (meaning on the Gulf of Constantinople) is known as Abydos<sup>53</sup> which is the mouth of the gulf which is pouring in the Sea of Egypt and Syria and its beginning is from the Sea of Maeotis which is known as the Caspian Sea. Its width at the beginning is about ten miles and there, there is a city of the Rūm called Mesene which forbids whatever ships that are coming down to them which belong to the Kūdkānah<sup>54</sup> and other kinds of Rūs; the

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52. لاذقة : This city may be identified either as Ladoga on Lake Ladoga or Aleshki, a city not far from the mouth of the Dnieper. I, however, prefer the former because the author stretches the boundries of Pontus as far north as the North Pole. It is also possible that he confused Ladoga with Aleshki.

53. أبُدوا (Abudwā); Abydos on the Dardanelles.

54. الكوركانة. Seippel (P. XXX) suggests that this should be identified with البورعانة. See Footnote 43 above.

Rūm call them Arūsīyā<sup>55</sup>, which means the "Red". Many of them were absorbed in our times into the Rūm as were the Armenians and the Bulgars who are a kind of Slavs, and the Patzinaks from the Turks and they filled with them their forts which are next to the Syrian ports and put them next to Burjān<sup>56</sup> and the other nations that are everlastingly (hostile to) them and surrounding them.

And he said: (And we have mentioned) those who lived in the mountain of Qabaq<sup>57</sup> such as the Al-Lakz<sup>58</sup> and those who are neighboring Bāb al-Abwāb, and the nations who are near this mountain such as the Alans, Sarīr, Khazars, Jurzān<sup>59</sup>, Abkhasians, Sabiri<sup>60</sup>, Burjān, Cossacks<sup>61</sup>, Iberians, Rūs, Bulgars, Franks and Slavs.

### VIII

(This section contains a poem of Al-Mutanabbi. The translation of this poem will not be included in this volume).

55. اروسيا (Gr. *Ῥωσία*).

56. برجان; possibly Jurjān on the Caspian Sea.

57. جبل القبق Jabal al-Qabaq.

58. اللکز; possibly Lucuci on the Sea of Azov.

59. جرزان; possibly Jurjān.

60. الصنارية; the name indicates either the Saxiner (south of Bashkir) or Sabiri, where the letter (س = b) has been replaced mistakingly by (ن = n).

61. الكاسكية, Al-Kāsakiyyah.

## IX

From the Book of

Al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik

Ibn Hawqal

(A.D. 977-8)

He said: The land of the Slavs is wide and long; about two months (journey) each direction. Bulgar is a small city which does not have many provinces. It was famous because it was the capital of these kingdoms, but the Rūs, the Khazars, Itil, and Semender<sup>62</sup> have swept it off in the year 358/968 and went immediately to the land of the Rūm and to Spain. And the Rūs are a nation in the Region of Bulgar, between it and the Slavs.

And he said: And the cavalry detachment of 'Abd-al-Rahmān<sup>63</sup> never amounted to five-thousand horsemen paid by him and guarding his court, because he was content with the people of the frontier to defend him against the danger of his hostile neighbors, the Rūm. He had no enemies except them (the Rūm); and he seldom bothered with them. The ships of the Rūs, the Turks, the Slavs and the Patzinaks, who are a generation of Turks neighboring the land of the Khazars and the Bulgars, may sometimes come and loot the provinces of Spain; but they may (also) return in defeat.

And he said: As for the city of Bardha'a, it is the

62. سندر a city on the west coast of the Caspian Sea.

63. He must be 'Abd-al-Rahmān III (Caliph 929-61), a contemporary of Ibn Hawqal (943-77).



mother city of Arrān and the eye<sup>64</sup> of those lands. It is a very big city, a parasang in length and less than that in width. It is magnificent for its beauty, fertility and the abundance of plants, fruits, trees, and rivers. It has many markets, hotels and baths in spite of the disturbances that befell it and in spite of the events since the days of the Rūs until now, i.e., the transgressions of rulers and the mismanagement of the insane.

And he said: And this sea (meaning the Caspian Sea) has no connection with any of the seas which are on the face of the earth, in spite of the similarity of substance and mixture, except what comes to it from the river of the Rūs which is known as Itil, which is connected with a branch that brings it to the gulf which comes out of the land of Constantinople to the Ocean Sea.

And he said: As for Khazar, it is the name of the region and its capital city is called Itil. And Itil is the name of the river which flows to it from Russia and the Bulgars and ends up in the Caspian Sea. Itil is (divided) into two sections: One section is on the western bank of this river which is called Itil, and it is the bigger. There is a section on its eastern bank. This city has no villages, and their plantations are spread out. All of them go out in

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64. I.e. the most important city.

the summer to what they have sown, and that is about twenty parasangs, and they take it (the crop) by carts to the river, and to a position near it (the town); and they transfer that which was gathered near the river by ships, and that which is near the town by carts. Most of their diet is rice and fish. Whatever of honey, wax and fleeces that is carried to them comes from the region of the Rūs and the Bulgars. Likewise, the fine skins which are carried to the distant countries exist nowhere but in those northern rivers which are in the region of the Bulgars and the Rūs and Kiev. The fine skins which are in Spain come from the rivers which are in the regions of the Slavs and they are shipped to the gulf on which is the land of the Slavs. This gulf has already been described. Most of these skins are in the land of the Rūs and some are from Gog Magog, and they are of excellent quality. They reach the Rūs because they are neighboring Gog Magog who carry them (the skins) to them. They sold them (the skins) in Bulgar before they destroyed it in the year 358/968. Some of that is exported to Khwarizm due to the frequent visits of the Khwarizmians to the Bulgars and the Slavs, and their raids on them and capturing them. The mart of the Russian trade, which was in Khazrān, is still so.

And he said: The Khazar have another city also called Semender, and it is between Itil and Bab al-Abwāb. In it there were many gardens which were said to have included 40,000 vineyards; I asked a contemporary in Jurjan about

them, in the year 358/968 and he said: "If there was any vineyard or garden, the poor now get no alms from it, nor has Allah created there a leaf on a branch", meaning that all those things have perished along with the land. Most of them (their trees) were vines. Muslims and others inhabited it, and they had their mosques; the Christians had churches and the Jews synagogues. But the Rūs put an end to all that and destroyed all that was on the Itil River and which belonged to the creatures of Allāh: The Khazars, the Bulgars and Burtas, and they conquered them. Then the people of Itil took refuge in the peninsula of Bāb al-Abwāb and fortified themselves in it. Some of them (took refuge) in the isthmus of Siabkuh.<sup>65</sup>

And he said; And the Rūs are three types. One type is nearer to the Bulgars and their king is in a city called Kiev, which is bigger than Bulgar. Another type, which is higher than them, are called the Sulāwiyyah<sup>66</sup> and their king is in a city called Sulā. Still another type is a nation called the Artinians and their king dwells in Artā.<sup>67</sup> People reach with trade to Kiev. As for Artā, I did not hear anyone mentioning that a stranger ever entered it, because they kill every stranger who steps on their land. They, however, travel by water trading and never telling (others)

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65. سياه كويه Siyāh Kūyah.

66. See Note 22 above.

67. ارتنا Arthā.

about any of their affairs and commerce; and they do not let anyone accompany them or enter their land. And from Arta they carry the sable and the black foxes and lead. The Rūs are a people who burn themselves when they die. With their rich men the maidens are burned willingly as it is done in Ghanah<sup>68</sup> and Kūghah<sup>69</sup> and the regions of the land of India in Canoge<sup>70</sup> and others. Some of the Russians shave their beard and some of them twist it, like the manes of beasts, and plait it. They wear small tunics. The Khazars and the Bulgars wear the complete tunic. The Rūs are still trading with the Khazars and the Rūm. Great Bulgaria is bordering the Rūm in the north and they are many in number. Their strength was such that they imposed tribute in the past upon the Rūm who were next to them. In Inner Bulgaria there are Christians and Muslims. In our time nothing has been left from among the Bulgars, the Burtas and the Khazars because the Rūs have done away with them all and wrested all those lands from them and have taken them over. Those who escaped their hands are scattered around neighboring places because of their love of dwelling their country, hoping that they may placate them (the Rūs) so as to (be able) return under their overlordship.

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68. **غانه** , possibly the Ganges River, or Ghana in Africa.

69. **كوغة**

70. **قنوج** , on the northern Ganges River.

X

From the Book of

Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fī Ma'rifatal-Aqālīm

(A.D. 985-6)

He said: Itil is a large city on a river called Itil<sup>71</sup> which extends to the lake (meaning the Lake of Tabaristan<sup>72</sup>). The name of the city on its bank in the region of Jurjān is called after it. Around it (the city of Itil) and in it there are trees. There are many Muslims in it; and their king was a Jew who had laws, and Muslim, Jewish and Christian judges. I have heard that Al-Ma'mūn<sup>73</sup> had invaded them (attacking) their king from Jurjān<sup>74</sup> and called upon him (the king) to become Muslim. Then I heard that a race of Rūm, called the Rūs, invaded them and ruled their land.

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71. I.e., The Volga River.

72. The Caspian Sea.

73. Son of Hārūn al-Rashīd; he was Caliph at Baghdad (813-33).

74. الجرجانية Al-Jurjāniyyah.

## XI

From the Book of

Al-Fihrist

Al-Nadīm

(A.D. 995)

He said: Someone whom I trust has told me that some of the kings of the Mountain of the Caucasus<sup>75</sup> has sent him to the king of the Rūs and claimed that they had an inscription engraved on wood. He showed me a white piece of wood on which there were engravings and I do not know whether they are words or individual letters; for example:

Handwritten Arabic script, likely a transcription of an inscription. The text is written in a cursive style and appears to be a single line of text.

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75. جبل القبق Jabal al-Qabaq. See Birkeland p. 53.

## XII

From the Book Composed by  
Al-Antāki according to the  
History of ibn al-Batriq

He said: And in this year (meaning the year 329/940) the Rūs invaded Constantinople and reached the gate of the Acropolis<sup>76</sup> in the Caspian Sea. The Rūm fought them and drove them off and overcame them.<sup>77</sup>

And he said: And the Bulgars<sup>78</sup> took the opportunity of Emperor Nicephorus'<sup>79</sup> activity in raiding the Muslim countries and they disturbed his provinces, invading what is neighboring them of his countries. Then he advanced against them and hurt them and made peace with the Rūs who were at war with him. He agreed with them (the Rūs) to attack the Bulgars and crush them. Enmity was inflamed among them and each one was busy fighting the other. And the Rūs overcame the Bulgars and they captured their city which is called

76. باب اقروبولی Bāb Aqrūbuli. It is the Acropolis of Greek Byzantium. The reference to its being on the Caspian Sea is, obviously, due to a geographical confusion on the part of the author.

77. This is the expedition of Oleg "which the Povêst claims as a great victory for the Russians." See Chadwick, Russian History, 44.

78. Obviously the Bulgars of the Danube.

79. نقفور Naqfūr. He is certainly to be identified as Nicephorus Phocas (963-969) who was assisted by the Russian Prince Sviatoslav in his struggle against the Bulgarians. See A. A. Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire (Madison, 1958), 319.

Dristra<sup>80</sup>, which is their capital and they took it by amān,<sup>81</sup> and took away two sons of Samuel<sup>82</sup>, the king of the Bulgars, who were there.

And he said: And Tzimisces<sup>83</sup> was informed that the Rūs who had been pacified by Nicephorus and with whom he agreed to invade the Bulgars were intending to attack him and fight him and get revenge for Nicephorus. So, Tzimisces took the initiative and advanced towards them and besieged them in the city of Dristra which the Rūs had conquered from the Bulgars. And he fought them for three years. Then the king of the Rūs asked Tzimisces to give him surety and allow him to go out of the city to return to their own country; and he gave him that (request) and received the city from him as well as the fortresses which are next to it and which the Rūs had captured. He also received from him the two sons of Samuel, the king of the Bulgars, who were with him (i.e., the king of the Rūs), and he put the fortresses under his (own commanders) and returned to Constantinople.

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80. طليسترا (Ṭalastarā), it is Dristra (Durostolus, Silistria), on the lower Danube.

81. Amān is the surety given by the conqueror to the inhabitants of the surrendering city that the conqueror would not inflict revenge on the capitulating city.

82. صمويل (Samwīl), the greatest of the Bulgarian tzars, and a contemporary and enemy of Basil II Bulgaroctonus. Samuel died in 1014 of a shock after he saw 14,000 Bulgarians blinded by Basil II and sent back to their homeland. See Vasiliev, Byzantine Empire, 319-20.

83. ابن الشمشق (Ibn al-Shamashqīq). He is John Tzimisces who became emperor (969-976) after the death of Nicephorus II Phocas.



## XIII

From the Book of

Al-Tafhim li-Awā'il Sinā'atal-Tanjīm

Al-Bayrūni

(A.D. 973-1048)

He said: Then in the midst of civilization in the land of the Slavs and the Rūs there is a sea known as Pontus among the Greeks. Among us it is known as the Sea of Trebizond<sup>84</sup>, because that is a city on it.

## XIV

From the Book of

Al-Yamīni

Al-'Utbi

(A.D. 1036)

He said: And Bughrajiq<sup>85</sup> marched until he reached Būshanj<sup>86</sup> Ṭāhir ibn-Khalaf met him together with his

84. طرابزنده (Ṭarābizundah).

85. بغراجق . He possibly is either King Bagrat III or King Bagrat IV, members of the Armenian Bagratid dynasty who were agents of the Arabs in Armenia (A.D. 806-1045). See V. Minorsky, Studies in Caucasian History (London, 1953), 41, 43, 47, 57, 75, 110. See also A. A. Vasiliev, Byzantine History, 314-15.

86. بوشنج , possibly Ushnej near lake Urmia; if this is true then the "B" in Būshanj is the preposition meaning "at".

heavily armed followers<sup>87</sup>. They fought, cutting the heads (of each other) through the partings of the hair and nibbling the bodies (of each other) from the waist and extracting the souls (of each other) by spear heads, and dicapitating (each other) with swords like the swords of the Rūs.<sup>88</sup>

## XV

From the Commentary on Diwān

Al-Mutanabbi

Al-Wāhidi

(A.D. 1075-6)

He said: And Sayf al-Dawlah<sup>89</sup> advanced toward al-Hadath<sup>90</sup> to build it. Its inhabitants had already surrendered it by agreement to the Domesticus<sup>91</sup> in the year 337/948. Sayf al-Dawlah entered it on Wednesday, twelve nights before the end

<sup>87</sup> ومن والده من العرب تحت الحديد (those who are loyal to him (who are) under iron (arms)).

88. I am not sure that the mention of the "swords of the Rūs" has much significance here, at least as far as the author-al-'Utbi-is concerned. It seems that he mentioned the Rūs in order to fit his rhyme after mentioning the word "heads" which is ru'us in Arabic.

89. He is Sayf al-Dawlah (944-67) the founder of the Hamdanid dynasty of northern Syria which lasted until 1003. See Hitti, Hist. of Arabs, 457.

90. المحدث, apparently a town on the Syrian-Byzantine frontier, described as a flourishing and prosperous borough, small, but having many fields and running waters. See V. Minorsky, Hudūd al-'Ālam, 149.

91. الدمستق (al-Dumustuq).

of Jamādā al-Ākhirah<sup>92</sup> in the year 343/954 and he started immediately to mark out the foundations and he dug the first (dirt) with his hands asking (the favor) of Allāh Almighty. By Friday Phocas<sup>93</sup>, the Domesticus of the Christians, challenged him with about 50,000 knights and infantry men of Rūm, Armenians, Rūs, Slavs, Bulgars and Khazars. The battle took place on Monday, the last day of Jamādā al-Ākhirah, from the beginning of the day until the afternoon. Then Sayf al-Dawlah charged on him himself with about five-hundred of his young men and others of his men; he directed (his attack) toward his retinue and defeated him and Allah Almighty made him triumph over him and he killed about three-thousand of his soldiers and captured many of his scholarii<sup>94</sup> and archons<sup>95</sup> and he killed most of them save some. And he captured Theodosius<sup>96</sup>, the one-eyed, the patriarch of Samandwā<sup>97</sup> and Lycandi<sup>98</sup> and a son-in-law of the Domesticus; he also captured the grandson of the Domesticus. He remained in al-Hadath until he built it

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92. The fifth month in the Muslim calendar.
93. ابن الفقاس (Ibn al-Faqqās). He is Nicephorus Phocas who was at this period a Byzantine general. See Footnote 79 above.
94. اسخارية (Iskhalāriyyah).
95. اراخنة (Arākinah): a generic plural of, possibly, ارخون Arkhūn (Archon).
96. تودس (Tūdhis)
97. سمندوا; possibly Samosata, on the Syrian-Byzantine border.
98. لقتدوا (Laqandwā), in southeastern Anatolia.

and with his own hand he put the last merlon in it on Tuesday, the 13th of Rajab of the (same) year.

And he said: And the news came to Sayf al-Dawlah at the end of the day, Tuesday the sixth of Jamādā al-Ūlā in the year 344/955 that the Domesticus and the Christian armies had attacked the frontier city of al-Ḥadath on Sunday and had erected clever fortresses against it estimating, falsely, this was an opportunity (for them) because they doubted the perfectness of its construction by the hand of Sayf al-Dawlah; and because their king had ordered them to advance on it and reenforced them with (all) types of Heathen: Bulgars, Rūs, and others and sent with them the munitions. Sayf al-Dawlah started immediately and shifted his headquarters. And he looked into whatever he had to look into that night and he departed from Aleppo<sup>99</sup> early Wednesday, the seventh (of the month) and reached Ra'ban, although the news from al-Ḥadath was not clear to him because they (the Byzantines) were in control of (all) the roads in order to leave him ignorant of what they were doing. When the dawn came he wore his arms and commanded his men to do likewise and advanced slowly. When he approached al-Ḥadath, the scouts came back (with the news) that the enemy of Allāh Almighty had departed when the horses of Sayf al-Dawlah approached them on a high place called al-'Ibrāni<sup>100</sup> and they (the enemy) had still been wandering. And

99. حلب (Ḥalab)

100. العبراني ; other variant readings given by Seippel (p. XXXIV) are العراني (al-'Arāni), المراني (al-'Arānīn), المرانييس (al-'Aranīs).

the people of Al-Ḥadath had refused to fight (receiving their orders by messengers) because they had feared that the messengers might be ambushed. Sayf al-Dawlah, then, halted outside (the walls) and his lieutenant told him that they (the enemy) had challenged him and besieged him, and Allāh had not allowed him to overcome them because they had made holes in an old wall of the city. Then their scouts had brought to them the news of Sayf al-Dawlah and his reaching of the frontier town of Ra'bān. So, they became panic stricken and confusion befell them (the Byzantines) all and each group went astray and the people of Al-Ḥadath went out and charged against some of them (the Byzantines) and took their war machine and fixed it in their own fortress.

## XVI

From the Book of  
Al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik

Al-Bakri

(A.D. 1068)

He said: With these (meaning the Bulgars) are connected the Rūs and they are many races and they possess islands, ships, and ability and are experienced seamen. They are connected with the Sea of Pontus which has been mentioned before. This is a Heathen nation and they come to Spain every two-hundred

years. They have an access to it (Spain) through the Gulf of the Okianos Sea not through the gulf on which is the copper tower which is a gulf connected to the Sea of Maeotis and Pontus.

And he said: And the Slavs are the descendant of Madai the son of Japheth.<sup>101</sup> Their dwelling places are in the north until they are connected with the west. Ibrahīm ibn Ya'qūb al-Isrā'īli said that the land of the Slavs extended from the Syrian Sea.<sup>102</sup> to the Ocean Sea in the north. Some of the tribes of the steppes have occupied some of it and they are still living among them. They are many and different races and they were gathered in the past by a king called Mākhā and he was from a race of them called Walītāba<sup>103</sup> which is an esteemed race among them. Then there was a schism among them; so, their organization withered away and their races clattered in (disputing) parties and each race is ruled by a (different) king. Their kings now are four: the king of

101. مازاي بن يافت (Heb. מַדַּי בֶּן יַאֲפֶֿת). See Gen. 10:2.

102. البحر الشامي (Al-Baḥr al-Shāmi), where "Shām" is Syria.

103. ماجا; other variants given by Seippel (p. XXXV) are ماجا (Mājā), ماجك (Māj?k). For the race of وليتابا (Walītāba) Seippel (ibid.) gives the variants ولينابا (Walīnbābā), لينابا (Līnbābā) and ولينانا (Walīnānā). It is possible that this is an allusion to an ancient Slavonic national legend connected with the ancient deity Mokosh (Sanskrit mokṣa which means "liberation", "redemption"). On Mokosh see Vernadsky, History of Russia, II, 55, 58; and Chadwick, Russian History, 91.

the two Bulgarias<sup>104</sup>; Boleslav<sup>105</sup> the king of Prague<sup>106</sup> and Bohemia<sup>107</sup> and Cracow<sup>108</sup>; Mieszko<sup>109</sup> the king of the interior and Nāqūn<sup>110</sup> in the farthest west; and neighboring the land of Nāqūn in the west are the Saxons<sup>111</sup> and some of the Northmen<sup>112</sup>. As for the land of Boleslav, it extends from the city of Prague to the city of Cracow, a walking distance

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104. **البلغارين** (al-Bulghārayn), the dual form of "Bulghār". Another variant reading given by Seippel (p. XXXV) is **البلغاريين** (al-Bulghāriyyīn) which is a sound masculine plural meaning "the Bulgarians".
105. **بريسلاو** (Buriṣlāw): He is Boleslav I of Poland (992-1025).
106. **فراغة** (Frāghah).
107. **بويمة** (Būymah).
108. **كراكو** (Krākū).
109. **ميشقه** (Mishqah); he must be identified with Mieszko of Poland who was baptized in 966. See George Vernadsky, A History of Russia (New Haven, 1948), II, 61.
110. **ناقون**; other variant readings given in Seippel (p. XXXV) are **ناقور** (Nāqūr), **ياقون** (Yāqūn) and **ماقون** (Māqūn). It should, probably, be read **ماقور** (Māqūr) who possibly are the Magyars; but in another instance (see footnote 117 below) the author mentions the Magyars (or the Hungarians) as **الانقريين** (al-Unquriyyīn), and it is unlikely that he could have considered the Magyars and the Hungarians as two different peoples. It is, therefore, possible that **ناقون** (Nāqūn) and its variants are a serious corruption of Magdeburg.
111. **سكسون** (Saksūn).
112. **مرمان** (Murmān)

of three weeks. It is neighboring, lengthwise, the land of the Turks. The city of Prague is built of stones and lime; and it is the greatest city in commerce. The Rūs and the Slavs come to it from Cracow with merchandise. From the land of the Turks, Muslims, Jews and Turks come to it with merchandise as well as with Byzantine gold coins<sup>113</sup>. And they carry from them slaves, silk and different kinds of furs... Neighboring Mieszko to the east are the Rūs, and in the interior are the Prussians<sup>114</sup>. And the Prussians dwell on the Ocean Sea and they have a different tongue and they do not know the languages of their neighbors. They are famous for their courage: If an army comes to (attack) them, each man of them does not wait until his comrades join him, but he goes out alone and strikes with his sword until he dies. The Rūs raid them by ships from the west. To the west of the Rūs is the city of Women to which belong (many) territories and slaves. And they (the women) bear (children) from their slaves. If a woman gives birth to a male she kills him. They ride horses and practice warfare and they are courageous and brave. Ibrahīm ibn Ya'qūb al-Isrā'īli said: The information about this nation is true, and Otto<sup>115</sup>, the king of the Rūm told me of that. In general, the Slavs are (people)

113. المتاقيل البيزنطية (al-mathāqīl al-bīzanṭiyyah)

114. بروس (B?rūs).

115. هوتة (Hūtuh). He must be Otto III (983-1003), who was Byzantine-educated and who called himself imperator romanorum. See Vasiliev, Byzantine Empire, 328-9.



of bravery and roughness; and if not for their dissensions by reason of the branching of their clans and the scattering of their tribes, no other nations would have paralleled them in strength. They have lived in the most generous of lands and the most abundant in foodstuff. They apply themselves in farming and searching for livelihood; and in that they are superior to all the nations of the steppes. They frequent with their merchandise, in land and sea, the Rūs and Constantinople. Most of the tribes of the steppes speak Slavonic because they are mixed with them such as the tribes of the Ṭudishkīn<sup>116</sup>, the Hungarians<sup>117</sup>, the Patzinaks, the Rūs and the Khazars.

## XVII

From the Book of

Takmilat Tārīkh al-Ṭabari

Al-Hamadāni

(A.D. 1127)

He said: And in this year (meaning the year 332/943) the army of the Russians went out to Azerbaijan and conquered Bardha'ah and occupied it and enslaved its inhabitants. Then

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116. الطرشكين; other variants given by Seippel (p. XXXVI) are الطرشكين (al-Ṭurishkīn), الطرشكيين (al-Ṭudishkiyyīn) and الطرشكية (al-Ṭurishkiyyah). They are the Germans (Deutsch, Tedeschi). But, on the other hand, they are wrongly placed geographically for Germans. This word, then, could be derived from Tchud, Slavonic for peoples of Finnish (e.g., Esthonians) speech.

117. الدُنقريين (al-Unquriyyīn).

the Marzubān<sup>118</sup> ibn Muḥammad gathered his army and the volunteers came to him until he had 200,000 men but he could not resist them. Their king used to ride an ass; and the Marzubān prepared for them an ambush but he (the Rūs king) escaped from their hands. Then he (the Marzubān) asked the people to counter-attack but no one would go with him because of the fear that became deep in their souls. So, he returned alone hoping for martyrdom; then some Dailamites were ashamed and they returned with him. And their (the Rūs') prince was killed (together) with seven-hundred of them and he (the Marzubān) forced them to take refuge in a fortress. Then plague inflicted the Russians when they ate fruit; and when one of them died he was wrapped with his possessions and arms and his wife was buried with him, and (also) his slave if he loved him. When they (the Rūs) went away the Muslims dug out from their graves (many) possessions. Then they (the Rūs) carried on their backs their possessions and jewelry and burned everything else, and they took the women and the children and went to their ships. Five of them gathered in a garden in Barda'ah, among them there was a beardless lad and with them there were women captured from the Muslims. The Muslims surrounded them and a group of Dailamites gathered against them and no one of them (the Rūs) was reached until they killed a number of Muslims; none of them could be captured. The beardless lad was the last one of them to remain and he killed himself.

118. المرزبان; he is Marzubān b. Muḥammad b. Musāfir, the second ruler of the Dailamite dynasty of the (continued)

## XVIII

From the Book of  
Nuzhat al-Mushtāq  
 Al-Idrīsī  
 (A.D. 1153)

He said: As for the city of Semender it was in the past a big and prosperous city and it was built by Anūsharwān<sup>119</sup>; and there were uncouthable trees and vineyards in it, but the tribe of Rūs invaded it and destroyed it and its condition changed (for the worse).

And he said: As for the land of the Russians, it is a big land with few cities and isolated cultivations. Between one town and another there are vast distances and isolated provinces. They have wars and continuous battles with their kinsmen and with those who are near their country.

And he said: And the city of Matrīga<sup>120</sup> is a big and

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118. Musāfirids. See Chadwick, *Russian History*, 52; V. Minorsky, *Studies in Caucasian History* (London, 1953) Marzuban seems to have been originally a title; it appears with the definite article "al-", and, according to Mrs. Chadwick, *ibid.*, it means "the warden of the marches".
119. انوشروان: He is the great Persian king Anūsharwān (531-78) who built a great academy of medicine and philosophy at the city of Jundi-Shāpur about the year 555. See Hitti, *Arab History*, 308-9.
120. مطرخا (Matrakha), a city near the mouth of Kuban River, across the strait from the Crimea. Al-Idrīsī confuses the Kuban River with the Don River (Tanais). See Footnote 121 below.

prosperous city with many regions and wide land. Its villages are civilized and it has continuous plantations. It is on a great river called Tana'is<sup>121</sup> which is a branch that reaches it (Matriga) from the Itil River<sup>122</sup> most of which passes by the city of Itil<sup>123</sup> which is on the Sea of Tabaristan<sup>124</sup>; and from the city of Matriga to the city of Rūsiyyah<sup>125</sup> there are twenty-seven miles. And between the people of Matriga and the people of Rūsiyyah there is always a war full of dangers. The city of Rūsiyyah is on a big river coming to it from the Qarbāta Mountain<sup>126</sup>. And from the city of Rusiyyah to the city of Būtar<sup>127</sup> there are twenty miles.

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121. تنيس; i.e., the Don River. It has been already pointed out (Footnote 120 above) that the Don has been confused with the Kuban.
122. The Volga River.
123. Modern Astrakhan.
124. I.e., the Caspian Sea.
125. The author is referring very clearly to a city and not to a district or country. Rūsiyyah, therefore, must be identified as the city of Rossia near the mouth of the Don River and not as the land of the Rūs.
126. جبل قرباتا; the author is almost certainly referring to the Carpathian Mountains.
127. بوترا; it is possibly the city of Poti on the Abkhasian Black Sea Shore. The distance of twenty mile between Rossia and Poti should not be considered seriously because of the general inaccuracy in Al-Idrīsī's estimation of distances.

And he said: And Kiev<sup>128</sup> is the city of the Turks who are called Rūs. And the Rūs are three types: One of them is a branch called Brūs<sup>129</sup> and their king dwells in the city of Kiev; another type is called the Ṣalāwiyyah<sup>130</sup> and their king dwells in the city of Ṣalāwah and it is a city on the top of a mountain. A third type is called the Arthāniyyah<sup>131</sup>, and their king dwells in the city of Arthā. And the city of Arthā is beautiful, on an impregnable mountain. And it is situated between Ṣalāwah and Kiev. From Kiev to Arthā there are four stages<sup>132</sup>, and from Arthā to Ṣalāwah four-days (journey). The Muslim merchants reach from Armenia to Kiev. As for Arthā, the Sheikh al-Ḥawqali<sup>133</sup> related that none of the strangers entered it, because they (the people of Arthā) kill absolutely any stranger that reaches them and no one dares to enter their

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128. كويابة (Kūyābah).

129. يسمى بروس (yusammā birūs). This expression can be translated as "called by (the name of) Rūs", considering the prefix "b" in "birūs" as the Arabic preposition meaning "by...". But I prefer to translate the expression as "called Prussians" in spite of the inaccuracy of his classification, because he does not use this preposition when he enumerates the other two peoples.

130. الصلوية . See Footnote 22 above.

131. الارثانية . See Footnote 23 above.

132. Possibly four-days journey.

133. I.e., Ibn Ḥawqal (fl. 943-77), the Arab geographer.

land. The skin of black tigers and black foxes and lead are brought out from them, and the merchants of Kiev bring these from them. The Rūs burn their dead and they do not bury them. Some Rūs shave their beards and some twist them like the manes of beasts. Their dress is (composed of) small tunics; but the dress of the Khazars, the Bulgars and the Patzinaks are complete tunics (made) of silk, cotton, linen and wool, ...

Burtas have a language which they speak which is different from the language of the Khazars, as well as from the language of the Russians. The Russians are two kinds: One kind are those whom we spoke of already. Another kind of them are neighboring the land of the Hungarians<sup>134</sup> and Jathūliyyah<sup>135</sup>, and they have now, at the time of compiling this book, already defeated Burtas, the Bulgars and the Khazars and have wrested the land from their hands; nothing has remained to the other nations except their names on the land.

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134. أنكرية ('Unkariyyah).

135. جثولية (Jathūliyyah); possibly Gotthia (modern Crimea).

## XIX

This section contains excerpts from Tārīkh Ṭabaristān by Ibn Isfandiyār. The language of the book is Persian, hence, the translation of this section will not appear in this volume. Ibn Isfandiyār's work, however, has been translated by E. G. Browne, History of Tabaristan (London, 1905).

## XX

From the Book of

Mu'jam al-Buldān

Yāqūt al-Hamawī

(A.D. 1179-1229)

He said: And Aḥmad ibn Faḍlān, the ambassador of al-  
<sup>136</sup>Muqtadir to the Slavs said in a letter of his, mentioning  
 what he saw in those lands, that Khazar is the name of a  
 region whose capital city is called Itil; and Itil is the  
 name of the river which flows to the Khazars from the (land)  
 of the Rūs and the Bulgars. Itil is a city and Khazar is  
 the name of the Kingdom not the name of a city. Itil has  
 two sections: One section is on the western (bank) of this  
 river which is called Itil and it is the bigger of the two;  
 and (another) section is on its eastern (bank) -- This city  
 has no villages but (its people's) plantations are spread  
 out. They go out in the summer for about twenty parasangs  
 and sow; then when it becomes ripe, they gather some of it  
 near the river and some near the desert. Then they carry it  
 by carts and by water. Most of their food is rice and fish

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136. المقتدر ; an Abbasid caliph whose reign of twenty-four  
 years (908-32) was marked by political instability.  
 Al-Muqtadir was dethroned by the eunuch Mu'min al-  
 Muzaffar, the chief of the bodyguard, then killed after  
 a brief restoration to the throne. See Hitti, Hist.  
of Arabs, 468-9.



and whatever they have other than that is carried to them from the Rūs, the Bulgars and Kiev.

And he said: Rūs, and sometimes called Rus, are a nation whose land is bordering the Slavs and the Turks and they have a unique language and religion and law which are peculiarly theirs -- Al-Muqaddasi said: They are in a diseased island which is surrounded by a lake. It (the island) is a fortress for them against whoever seek (to attack) them. Their number is estimated at 10,000 persons. They have neither fields nor animals. The Slavs raid them and take away their possessions. If a boy is born to one of them he throws him a sword saying: "Thou hast nothing save what thou gainest by thy sword." If their king judges between two opponents and they do not accept (his judgment), he says: "Have your trial by your swords, and whichever sword is sharper wins the case." It was they who conquered Bardha'ah for one year and devastated it until Allāh regained it from them and exterminated them. And I have read in the letter of Aḥmad ibn Faḍlān ibn al-'Abbās ibn Rāshid ibn Ḥammad, the client of Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān and the ambassador of al-Muqtadir to the King of the Slavs, in which he has related what he saw from the time he departed from Baghdad until he came back to it; and I shall relate what he mentioned in it as it has been said because it is wonderful: --

He said: And I saw the Rūsiyyah when they brought their trade and halted on the Itil river. I have never seen more perfect bodies (than theirs); they are like palm-trees, blond and ruddy; they wear neither tunics nor Khaftans, but a man wears a dress with which he wraps one of his two sides and he brings out one of his hands from it. There is with each one of them a sword, a knife and an axe which are always with them. Their swords are ridged Frankish plates. From the toe-nail of each one of them up to his neck there tattooed images of trees and figures and the like. Each woman among them has a small brassiere bound on her breasts. It is (made) of iron, copper, silver or gold according to the ability and wealth of her husband. Each brassiere has a ring in which there is a knife bound on the breast too. On the women's neck there are necklaces of gold or silver, because when the man possesses 10,000 dirhams he makes a necklace for his wife. When he possesses 20,000 he makes two necklaces for her; and every time (his wealth) increases by 10,000 dirhams he adds to her another necklace. So, on the neck of some of them you may find many necklaces. The most prized jewelry among them are the green beads of pottery which are formed on the polishing stone.<sup>137</sup> They

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137. الذي يكون على السفن has been mistranslated by Robert Blake and Richard Frye--quoted by Carleton S. Coon, A Reader in General Anthropology (New York, 1948), 411. Blake and Frye translate this clause as "which are found on ships". I, however, am convinced that يكون must be read Yukawwanu, "is formed" and not Yakūnu, "is" or "is found"; likewise السفن must be read al-safan, "polishing stone" and not al-sufun "ships."

are exceedingly proud of them and they buy one bead for one dirham and they make them into necklaces for their women. And they are the filthiest creatures of Allāh; they do not purify themselves from excrement nor do they wash themselves from impurity, just like the asses going astray. They come from their country and anchor their ships in Itil which is a large river and they build on its bank large wooden houses and in each house ten or twenty or less or more may gather and for each one of them (there is) a bed on which he sits with his female slaves who are comely for trade. A man may perform sexual intercourse with his female slave while his comrade is looking at him; and a group of them may gather together in this state, next to each other. A merchant may enter upon them to buy a female slave from one of them and he may find him performing sexual intercourse with her, but he does not remove himself from her until he satisfies his desire. It is indispensable for them that early every morning a female slave should come with a big vessel of water and she offers it to her master; he washes in it his face and his hands and the hair of his head he washes and combs with a comb in that vessel, then he blows his nose and spits in it and he saves nothing filthy which he does not do in that water. When he is through with doing what he needs the female slave carries it to the one next to him who will do what his comrade did. And she does not cease to carry it from one to another until she hands it round to everybody in the house and each one of them blows his nose and spits in it and washes his face and his hair in it. As soon as their ships reach this harbor each one

of them goes out with bread, meat, milk, onions and wine until he comes to a tall wooden pole which has the face of a human being and around it (there are) small figures and behind these figures there are tall poles which are erected on the ground. He comes to the big image and bows down to it and says: "O Lord! I have come from far away and I have with me so many female slaves and so many sable skins", until he mentions all that he brought with him of merchandise. Then he says, "I have brought thee this present," then he leaves what he has in front of the pole saying, "I want thee to make it easy for me to find a merchant who has (many) dinars and dirhams to buy from me whatever I want (to sell him) and who will not dispute with me on anything I say." Then he goes away. When it becomes hard for him to sell and his days (of stay) extend he comes back with a second and a third present. If it becomes difficult for him to obtain what he wants he carries a present to one of those small images asking it for mediation; and he says: "These art the wives and daughters of our Lord"; and he goes on from one image to another asking them and seeking mediation from them and beseeching them. His selling may become easier for him and when he sells (all) he says: "My Lord hast satisfied my need and I must reward him." Then he goes to several cows and sheep and kills them and gives away some of the meat as alms, then he carries the rest and throws it in front of that large pole and the little ones around it, and he hangs the heads of the cows and the sheep on those wooden poles which are erected on the ground. When night falls, dogs come and eat that, and the one who did

it says: "My Lord is satisfied with me and He ate my presents." If one of them becomes sick they erect for him a tent apart from themselves and put him in it and leave with him some bread and water, and they do not approach him or speak to him; nay, they do not even take care of him, especially if he is poor or a slave. If he recovers and rises he returns to them; and if he dies they burn him. But if he was a slave they leave him to the dogs and the flesh-eating fowl. When they catch a thief they bring him to a high great tree and they tie around his neck a strong rope then they hang him on the tree; he remains hanging until he falls into pieces from staying in winds and rain. And I was told that what they do to their chiefs, after death, things the least of which is cremation. So, I wanted to witness that, until (finally) I was informed of the death of a respected man of theirs. They put him in a grave and built a roof on it (leaving it) for ten days until they completed cutting and sewing his clothes. They make a small ship for one of their poor men and put him in it and then burn it. But they collect a rich man's possessions and divide it in thirds. One third goes to his family; another third for making his clothes, and with (the last) third they buy wine which they drink the day his female-slave kills herself and is burnt with her master. They drink wine excessively, for they drink it night and day.

One of them may die with a cup in his hand. And if a chief among them die his family says to his female-slaves and his boy-servants: "Who will die with him?" And somebody may say: "I". And if they say that, it becomes an obligation on them and it is not possible for them to back out at all; and even if they want (to withdraw) they are not allowed. The female-slaves often do that. When that man, whom I mentioned before, died they said to his female-slaves: "Who will die with him?" And one of them said "I". Then they appointed two female-slaves to keep her and be with her wherever she went and they would even wash her feet with their own hands. And they began to prepare (for the ceremony) and make his clothes and do whatever was needed; and the female-slave drank and sang everyday happily and rejoicingly. When the day came on which he and the female-slave were to be burnt, I came to the river in which there was his ship. And behold, it was brought out and four supports of heath and other wood were erected for it. And around it there were put some wooden human statues; then the ship was brought and put on that wood. They, then, went back and forth talking with a speech which I did not understand. All that took place while he (the dead chief) was still in his grave; they had not yet brought him out. Then they brought a bed and put it on the ship and covered it with Rūmi colorful brocade and Rūmi brocade pillows. Then an old woman came, who was called

the Angel of Death, and she made the bed which we have mentioned. She was the one in charge of its sewing and preparation and she was the one who killed the female-slave. And I perceived her to be a quack<sup>138</sup>, huge-sized and stern-looking. When they came to his grave they removed the earth from the wood and they removed the wood and brought him out (wrapped) in the same mantle in which he died. And I saw that he had turned black by reason of the coldness of the country. They had put with him in his grave wine, fruits and a lute. They brought out all that and behold, nothing had changed in him except his color. They dressed him, then, with trousers, rān(?), shoes, tunic, and a silk shirt with gold buttons on it. They put on his head a cap of silky sable and they carried him and placed him in the cabin which is on the ship and they made him sit on the bed and supported him with pillows. Then they brought wine, fruits and flowers and put them with him. And they brought bread, meat and onions and laid them between his hands. Then they brought a dog and cut it up in two pieces and threw it in the ship; and they brought all his weapons and put them beside him. Then they fetched two beasts and they made them run until they sweated and then cut them into pieces with swords and threw their flesh in the ship; then they brought two cows and cut them into pieces and threw them in the ship; then they brought a cock and a hen and

138. جوانبيرة (Juwānbīrah).

killed them and threw them in it. (All that was happening) while the female-slave who was to be killed was going to and fro, entering each of the men's rooms, and the owner of each room had sexual intercourse with her saying to her: "Say to thy lord: I have done this for your love." When it was Friday afternoon they brought the female-slave to something they had built resembling the frame of a door; then she put her feet on the palms of the hands of the men and she went over that frame and said her say; then they brought her down, then they lifted her up and she did as she did the first time; and they brought her down then lifted her up a third time and she did as she had done in the first two instances. Then they gave her a hen and she cut off its head and threw it (the head) away. Then they took the hen and threw it into the ship. Then I asked the interpreter about her action and he said: "She said in the first time, 'Behold, I see my father and mother'; and in the second time she said, 'Behold, I see all my dead relatives sitting'; in the third time she said, 'Behold, I see my lord sitting in Paradise and it is beautiful and green and with him there are men and boy-servants sitting, and he is calling me, so take me to him'". Then they took her toward the ship and she took off two bracelets which she had on and gave them to the old woman who is called the Angel of Death and who was to kill her. Then she took off



two anklets which she was wearing and gave them to the two maidens who were serving her and they were the daughters of the (woman) known as the Angel of Death. Then they took her up to the ship but did not make her enter the cabin. Then the men came with shields and wood and they gave her a cup of wine. She sang over it then drank it, and the interpreter told me that she was bidding farewell to her maiden companions. Then another cup was given to her and she sang for a long time while the old woman was urging her to drink it and enter the cabin in which there was her lord. I saw her, then, looking stupid; and she tried to enter the cabin but she entered her head between the cabin and the (side of) the ship. Then the old woman took her by the head and led her into the cabin and she entered with her. Then the men started to beat the shields with the wood lest her cries be heard and the other maidens might be frightened and would not volunteer to die with their masters. Then six men entered the cabin and they all had sexual intercourse with the maiden; then they laid her down beside her dead master. Two of them took hold of her feet and two took hold of her hands. The old woman who is called the Angel of Death put a noose around her (the maiden's) neck and gave (the two ends of the rope) to two men to pull it. Then she came with a great wide dagger and kept pushing it between the maiden's ribs and pulling it out while the two men were strangling her with the rope until she died. Then the closest

relative<sup>139</sup> of that dead man came along and took a piece of wood and lit it. Then he walked backward toward the ship, with the piece of wood in one hand and the other hand on his anus; and he was naked. He set fire to all that wood which was piled up under the ship. Then the people came with wood and fire-wood and with each one of them there was a piece of wood whose end he had lit, and he threw it into that wood. Then fire was set in that fire-wood, then in the ship, then in the cabin and the man and the maiden and all that there was in it (the ship). Then a great wind blew and the flame of the fire increased and its burning became fierce. Beside me there was a man of the Rūsiyyah, and I heard him talking to the interpreter who was with me. I asked him about what he had said and he told me that he was saying: "You Arabs are foolish, because you take your most beloved and generous person and lay him into the soil so that the animals and worms may eat him; but we burn him with fire in one moment so that he may enter Paradise immediately." Then he laughed excessively and said: "Because of the love of his Lord for him, He sent a wind in order to take him away in one hour." And no more than one hour elapsed and behold, the ship, the fire-wood, the dead man and the maiden were all ashes. Then they built on the site

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139. **الناس** must, obviously, be read **الناسي** "the people".

of the ship, which they had drawn out of the river, something like a rounded mound, and in its middle they erected a big wooden post and wrote on it the name of the man and the name of the King of the Rūs; then they went away.

He said: Among the regulations of the King of the Rūs was one that there should be with him four-hundred of his strong and trustworthy men. They die with him and shed their blood defending him. With each one of them there is a maiden who serves him and washes his head and prepares for him his food and drink; he also has another maiden with whom he has sexual intercourse. Those four-hundred men sit under his bed. His bed is huge and set with precious jewels. Forty maidens sit with him on his bed; and he may have sexual intercourse with one of them in the presence of his companions whom we have mentioned. He does not descend from his bed. When he wants to defecate he does that in a wash-basin. When he wants to ride they bring his beast to the bed and he mounts it from there. When he wishes to descend, his beast is brought forth so that he descends on it (directly). He has a viceroy who commands the armies and fights the enemies and represents him before his subjects.

This what I have quoted from the letter of Ibn-Faḍlān letter by letter and on him lies the responsibility of what he related and Allāh knows better about his accuracy. As for now, Christianity is their common religion.

## XXI

From the Book of  
Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārikh  
 Ibn al-Athīr  
 (A.D. 1160-1234)

\*(Notices on the conquest of the city of Bardha'ah<sup>140</sup> by the Rūs). He said: In this year (meaning the year 332/943) a group of Russians went out by sea to the region of Azerbaijan. By sea they sailed to the Kurr River<sup>141</sup> which is a large river. They reached Bardha'ah. The viceroy of al-Marzubān in Bardha'ah came out to them with a crowd of Dailamites<sup>142</sup> and volunteers exceeding 5000 men. They met the Rūs, but hardly one hour had elapsed before the Muslims fled and the Dailamites were completely annihilated. The Rūs pursued them to the city; and whoever had anything to ride fled and left the city. The Rūs entered it and gave surety (to the people) and behaved well. The Muslim armies

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140. **برذعة**; the capital of the province of Albania, in the eastern Caucasus. Bardha'ah is to be identified with the metropolis Patrav (modern Tertersk). See Chadwick, Russian History, 54-5.

141. **نهر الكرّ**; it is the old Cyrus River which empties in the Caspian Sea several miles south of Baku.

142. **الديلم** (al-Daylam); the inhabitants of the Province of Dailam, southwest of the Caspian Sea.

came from every direction and the Rūs fought them and the Muslims could not stand fast against them. The populace of the city went out and pelted the Rūs with stones and shouted at them; and the Rūs asked them to refrain from that but they did not refrain except the wisemen who withdrew themselves; but the populace and the commoners did not discipline themselves. When that situation lasted for a while their (the Russian's) herald announced that the people of the city should leave it and should not stay after three days. Those who had an animal to ride left, but most of them stayed after the dead-line. Then the Russians used arms against them and killed a great number of them and captured, after the killing, some 10,000 souls and they gathered the rest in the mosque and said: "Ransom yourselves or else we shall kill you." A Christian person mediated for them and it was decided that for each person twenty dirhams (should be paid). None but their wisemen accepted. When the Russians saw that there was no hope in receiving anything from them they killed them all and no one escaped from them except those who fled. They captured the possessions of its people and enslaved the captured women and chose those women whom they considered beautiful.

(The mention of the advance of al-Marzubān against them and his victory over them). When the Rūs did to the people of Bardha'ah what we have mentioned, the Muslims were indignant

and called upon each other for mobilization. Al-Marzubān ibn Muḥammad gathered the people and urged them to war. The number of his men reached 30,000 and he marched with them. He started skirmishing with them but came back defeated (every time). They stayed so for many days. In the meantime the Russians advanced toward Marāghah<sup>143</sup> and they ate much fruit and a plague inflicted them, and disease and death became abundant among them. When the affair lasted for a long while al-Marzubān employed cunning. He saw that he (should) set an ambush. He would meet them with his army and pretend running away from them, and when the ambush appeared he would come back to (attack) them. He suggested that to his people and the ambush was set. Then he met them and fighting ensued between them. Then al-Marzubān and his companions pretended defeat and the Russians pursued them until they passed the position of the ambush, but the people continued running away astray. Al-Marzubān related (the story); he said: "I shouted to the people to come back but they did not do so, by reason of the fear of the Russians which penetrated their hearts. Then I knew that if the people continued running away, the Russians would kill most of them; then they would return to the ambush and they would discover the ambushers and would kill them all." He said: "So, I returned alone, and my brother and my friend followed me, disposing myself for martyrdom. Upon that most of the

143. مراغة; a city in Azerbaijan described as "a large town, flourishing and pleasant, with running waters and flourishing gardens." See Minorsky, Hudūd, 65, 142.

Dailamites returned because they were embarrassed, and they came back and we fought them (the Russians). Then we called upon the ambushers with the signal which we had agreed upon and they came out from behind them (the Rūs), and we fought them very hard and we killed many people among them including their prince; the rest took refuge in the fortress of the city which is called Shahrīstān<sup>144</sup> to which they had transferred much of their supplies and they took with them their captives and possessions." Al-Marzubān besieged them and displayed patience in that; but the news came to him that Abu-Abdullāh al-Ḥusayn ibn Sa'īd ibn Hamdān<sup>145</sup> had advanced toward Azerbaijan and that he had reached Salamās<sup>146</sup>. His cousin Nāṣir al-Dawlah<sup>147</sup> had sent him to conquer Azerbaijan. When the news came to al-Marzubān he left some to continue besieging the Russians, and advanced against Ibn Hamdān and fighting ensued between them. Then snow came down and the people of Ibn Hamdān scattered away because most of them were Bedouins. Then a letter from Nāṣir al-Dawlah came to him

144. A town in Jurjān. Ibid., 133.

145. Apparently a leader of the Hamdānids who were established in northern Mesopotamia; then, under the leadership of Sayf al-Dawlah they became a major power in Syria until 1003. See Hitti, Hist. of Arabs, 457.

146. سلماس (also Salmās): A town in Azerbaijan.

147. ناصر الدولة. A Hamdānid chief who established himself as the chief ruler of Baghdad in 942. See Minorsky, Ḥudūd, 20 (Footnote 2).

informing him of the death of Tūzūn<sup>148</sup> and that he wanted to go down to Baghdad, and ordered him to come back to him; so he did. As for the followers of al-Marzubān, they continued fighting the Russians. Pestilence became more severe upon the Russians, and when they buried a man they buried with him his weapons; and the Muslims dug up again much such gear after the Russians had withdrawn. It came to pass that they (the Russians) went out of the fortress at night, carrying on their backs whatever they needed of possessions and so forth, and they went to the Kurr River and they embarked their ships and went away, and the people of al-Marzubān were unable to pursue them and take away what they had, so they left them, and Allāh had purged the land of them.

(Notices on a raid by Sayf al-Dawlah ibn Ḥamdān).

He said: In the year 343/954 in the month of Rabī 'al-Awwal Sayf al-Dawlah ibn Ḥamdān had raided the land of the Rūm<sup>149</sup>; he had killed, captured, enslaved and obtained booty. Among those killed was Constantine the son of the Domesticus.<sup>150</sup> This became distressing to the Rūm and to the Domesticus. He gathered his armies from among the Rūm, the Rūs, the Bulgars and others and advanced to the frontiers, and Sayf al-Dawlah

148. توزون; a Turkish chief at Baghdad, *ibid.*

149. I.e., the Byzantines.

150. قسطنطين بن الرستوق. (Qusṭanṭīn ibn al-Dumustuq).



ibn Ḥamdān marched against him. They met near al-Ḥadath in (the month of) Sha'bān. Fighting was fierce between them and the two parties stood fast. Then, it came to pass, that Allāh Almighty rendered the Muslims victorious and the Rūm were defeated and many of them and of those who were with them were killed, and the son-in-law (or brother-in-law) of the Domesticus, his grandson and many of his patricians were captured; and the Domesticus returned defeated and plundered.

## XXII

From the History of

Ibn al-'Amīd

(A.D. 1205-1273)

He said: And in this year, which is the year 329/940 the Rūs raided Constantinople, but the Rūm fought them and drove them back and they fled back to their own country.

## XXIII

From the Book of

Baṣṭ al-Ard fī Ṭūliha wa al-'Urd

Ibn Sa'īd Al-Maghribi

(A.D. 1208)

He said: And to the northeast of Naqjuwān<sup>151</sup> is the

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151. It is Naxua (Nakhichevan, Nascivan) on the Arxes River in Caucasia.

city of Al-Bāb<sup>152</sup>, the capital of the sultanate of Al-Bāb. It is, in three sections on the great Itil River, near its mouth on the Sea of Ṭabaristān.<sup>153</sup> The southern section was for the Muslims, the northern section was for the Jews, the Christians and the Heathen, and the section which is on the island was for the Khaqān of the Khazars who was a Jew. Then the Rūs destroyed it and abolished the sultanate of the Khazar in it.

And he said: And to the east of Alania<sup>154</sup> on a gulf at the very end of the Sea of Sinūb<sup>155</sup> there is the city of Khazariyyah which belonged to the Khazars who were annihilated by the Rūs. This sea may be called the Sea of Khazariyyah<sup>156</sup> after it (the city). It (the city) is on 71° longitude and 45° 30' latitude; and it is on a river which flows into the sea in its northern side.<sup>157</sup>

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152. I.e. Bab al-Abwāb (modern Derbent).

153. It is not clear whether the author is describing the city or the sultanate. If the description is that of the city of Bab al-Abwab, then he is confusing this city with the city of Itil (Astrakhan). If, however, he is describing the sultanate then we understand that this sultanate of Bāb al-Abwāb had extended over a large territory embracing a large portion of the eastern and northern coasts of the Caspian Sea (which the author calls the Sea of Ṭabaristān).

154. علانية (Allāniyyah).

155. بحر سينوب; Sinūb may be identified with Sinope on the Black Sea. This, however, presents the possibility that the author is confusing the Black Sea with the Caspian Sea.

156. I.e., the Caspian Sea.

157. It seems that the city under discussion is Itil (Astrakhan).

And he said: In the north of this sea (meaning the Sea of Maeotis) there pours a river which springs from the great sweet Lake of ṭūmā.<sup>158</sup> On the western bank of this river is Rossia<sup>159</sup> which is the capital of the Rūs, and they are a numerous people. They are the most handsome of all the creatures of Allāh; their faces are rather lengthy. This city is 57° 32' in longitude and 56° in latitude. On the Sea of Pontus and Maeotis they have many obscure cities. To the east of it is the Lake of ṭūmā — — . Into this lake many rivers pour. Al-Bayhaqi mentioned that they numbered over one-hundred and the largest was ṭanābris<sup>160</sup>, the long one, on which there were many Bulgarian and Turkish tribes.

## XXIV

From the Book of

Āthār al-Bilād wa Akhbār al-'Ibād

Al-Qazwini

(A.D. 1283)

He said: The Rūs are a great nation of Turks; their country is bordering the country of the Slavs. Al-Muqaddasi

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158. طوما. This river is the Don River (Tanais). The name "ṭūmā" is possibly a corruption of "Don".
159. روسيا (Rūsyā) a city on the Don near Sarkel.
160. طنابرس . It is the Dnieper River (old Danapris).

said that they were in a diseased island surrounded by a lake which is their fortification to repel their enemies. Aḥmad ibn Faḍlān said in his letter: I saw the Rūsiyyah when they brought their trade and halted on the Itil river. I have never seen more perfect bodies than theirs; they are like palm-trees, blond and white. They have a law and a language which are different from those of the rest of the Turks. But they are the filthiest creatures of Allāh. They neither clean themselves nor do they keep themselves away from filth. It is the custom of their King to be in a huge and high palace, and with him there are four-hundred of his favored and trusted men. They sit below his bed. He has a great bed set with jewels. Forty maidens sit with him on the bed. He may have sexual intercourse with one of them in the presence of his companions. He never descends from his bed. If he wants to excrete, a wash-basin is brought to him. When he wants to ride, his beast of burden is fetched beside his bed. He has a viceroy who leads the armies and manages the affairs of subjects and fights enemies. Among their habits is that whoever possesses 10,000 dirhams provides a gold necklace for his wife; when he possesses 20,000 he provides two necklaces, and so on. So, on the neck of a woman there may be many necklaces. If they find a thief they hang him on a high tree and they leave the body hanging until it falls to pieces.

## XXV

From the Book of

Manahij al-Fikar

Al-Waṭwāt

(A.D. 1318)

He said: And among the sons of Japheth are the Rūs, who are associated, as the author of the book of Nuzhat al-Mushtāq<sup>161</sup> claimed, with one of their cities which is called Rossia. In the sea of Maeotis they have islands, which they inhabit, and warships with which they fight the Khazars whom they reach from a gulf which pours into this sea from the Itil River. When they reach the end of the river<sup>162</sup> they enter another gulf which pours into the Caspian Sea and raid them (the Khazars). They believe in Heathenism and they burn their dead with fire. Some of them shave their beards, some twist them and some plait them. They have a language of their own. The neighbors of this nation are the Alans and the Burjāns.

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161. The author of Nuzhat al-Mushtāq is al-Idrīsī (fl. A.D. 1166) of Palermo.

162. فاذا صاروا الى عمود النهر

## XXVI

From the Book of

Nukhbat al-Dahr

Al-Dimashqi

(d.A.D. 1327)

He said: And Ṣa'id al-Andalusi said: The Sudān and the Berber are a nation and to their north are the Copts and the Franks. Then, the Indians and the Negroes are a nation and to their north are the Arabs, Syria<sup>163</sup>, Iraq and Persia. Then China<sup>164</sup>, and China is a nation and to its north are al-Khaṭā<sup>165</sup>, the Turks, Gog Magog. Then the Greeks and the Rūm are a nation and to their north are the Rūs and the Slavs, one nation.

And he said: And the River of the Slavs and the Rūs is a great river; it comes from the mountains of Saqsīn<sup>166</sup> and from the mountains of al-Kilābiyyah. There pour into it rivers (which come) from the land of Bāshqard<sup>167</sup> and Magyar<sup>168</sup> and from the land of Sardāq<sup>169</sup>. It also freezes

163. الشام (al-šā'm).

164. الصين وصين (al-šīn wa šīn).

165. الخا ; certainly to be identified as Kathay.

166. سقسين ; possibly the Saxin people, south of Bashkir.

167. باشقرد ; i.e., Bashkir(?).

168. ماجار (Mājār).

169. سرداق ; other variant reading given by Seippel (p. XLVII) is سوراق Sūdāq. It is either to be identified with Sardica (Sardaca) in Hungary or, and most likely, with Sudak, in the Crimea.

in the winter more so than the Itil River.

\*(The Fifth Chapter: Description of the Sea of Trebizond, the Sea of the Rūs and it is called Pontus and the Black). He said: The people who are concerned to learn about that said: The Sea of the Rūs and Surdāq is a dark sea, abundant in tempests, of great waves, awful, quick in sinking ships in it due to the severity of its foaming and tempests and due to the different stormy winds in it. It has nothing much that is useful for people except the sable and the fur of beaver and the slaves who are brought from the land of the Turks. There are seven islands of the Rūs in it; and the pirates are still operating in its western regions.

And he said: And the Rūs are associated with a city called Rossia on the north shore of the sea which is called after them. And it is said that they are descendants of Rūs son of Turk son of Ṭūj.

## XXVII

From the Book of

Al-Mukhtaṣar fī Akhbār al-Bashar

Abu al-Fidā

(A.D. 1273-1331)

He said: In this year (meaning the year 332/943) a group of Rūs went out in the sea and entered the Kurr River from the sea, then reached the city of Barda'ah. They captured

Barda'ah and killed and looted, then they returned by ships to their country.

## XXVIII

From the Book of  
Taqwīm al-Buldān  
Abu al-Fidā

He said: It is said in al-'Azīzi<sup>170</sup> that on the right of the land of the Bulgars, toward the south, is the Kingdom of the Kāsāq<sup>171</sup>, a nation between the Abkhasians and the Alans. Then, to the right and the south of the land of the Bulgars is the kingdom of the Alans to the end of the border of the Bulgars. Then it is connected after that from the south with the Kingdom of the Khazars, which is the end of the border of the Kingdom of the Bulgars, because it comes to a nation called al-Murdasiyyah<sup>172</sup>, who are akin to the Bulgars. They are strong and of great stature, such that ten of the strongest men from other peoples are not equivalent to one of them; they are heathen and worship the sun. In the east of

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170. This, obviously, is a reference to a certain historical work. This work, perhaps, is that which al-'Utaqi (d. A.D. 955) wrote under the Egyptian Fatimid al-'Azīz. On al-'Utaqi See France Rosenthal, A History of Muslim Historiography (Leiden, 1952), 53.

171. الكاساق ; they are the Casachians or the Circassians (Cassacks, Kazaks).

172. المرديسية ; possibly the Mordavians.



the al-Murdasiyyah, to the country of the Russians and in the north of the Slavs there are deserts void of civilization (extending) to the Ocean Sea. They (the deserts) cannot be inhabited due to the severity of cold, up to the confines of the Russians who are a nation of Turks connected from the east with the Ghuz Turks.

## XXIX

From the Book of

Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab

Al-Nuwayri

(A.D. 1332)

He said: In the middle of Shawwāl<sup>173</sup>, 353/964, Manuel<sup>174</sup> advanced with all his army of Heathen, Armenians<sup>175</sup> and Rūs, in a multitude the like of it never entered the island<sup>176</sup> before. When al-Ḥasan ibn 'Ammār<sup>177</sup> knew about

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173. It is the tenth month of the Muslim Calendar.

174. منويل (Manwīl). He was a Byzantine general. He was sent by the Domesticus to aid the rebels of the town of Rametta against the Muslims. The account of this campaign is given in a previous passage by al-Nuwayri which appears in Michele Amari, Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula (Lipsia, 1887), 438.

175. الارمن (Al-Arman).

176. I.e., the island of Sicily.

177. A general of the Fatimid Caliph Al-Mu'izz (952-75). He was commissioned by the Caliph to crush the revolt at Rametta. Ibid., 438.

their advance he prepared himself for combat. He put an army in the pass of Miqush<sup>178</sup> and in the pass of Dimnush<sup>179</sup>. The news reached Manuel and he dispatched two armies to confront them and a third one to the road to the city in order to forbid whoever (tried) to reach them with reinforcements. Al-Ḥasan prepared the fighters in the fortress and appeared with the soldiers to meet the infidel, with the determination that they would die. The infidel advanced in six contingents and surrounded the Muslims from all sides. The people of Ramṭah<sup>180</sup> descended against those who were next to them; and they met. Each group fought with those who were next to them. They fought until the Muslims entered a district of their own people.<sup>181</sup> The enemy was sure of his victory; but the Muslims chose death and thought that it was better and more fortunate for them. And the battle became more fierce, and al-Ḥasan ibn 'Ammār called at the top of his voice: "Good Allāh! The sons of Adam have spared me! Do not spare me!" Then he charged with his companions like one man. Then Manuel shouted upon the infidel saying: "Where is your boasting in front of your king? Where is what you have promised him concerning this little party of men?" Upon this

178. مقش. It has been mentioned by al-Idrīsī as ميقش (Miqush), situated between Messina and Taormina. Ibid., 65-66.


179. دمنش. Identified as Demona. See Michele Amari, Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula, Italian Version, Vol. I (Roma, 1880), 395.

180. رمة, i.e., Rametta.

181. دخل المسلمون حياً من الفهم. Seippel suggests that the meaning of حي (Ḥayy) designates a circle or area (continued)

the battle kindled furiously and Manuel charged and killed a Muslim man, then he was stabbed several times but he was not affected at all by reason of the immunity of the armor which he had on, Then a Muslim man charged him and stabbed his horse and hocked it, and he (Manuel) was killed. Then a dark thunder-cloud with lightning came and Allāh aided the Believers with a victory from His own, and the infidels fled and the Muslims were riding them down and killing them. Then they came to a place which they thought to be a plain, but they came upon a rugged slope which led them to the edge of a great moat like a ditch in the remoteness of its bottom. They fell in it and then they killed each other and the ditch was filled with them in spite of its length, width and depth, until the horses passed over them hurriedly. Those who remained of them ended in rugged places and huge moats. The battle continued from the beginning of the day until after the noon prayer. The flight of those who remained continued until the night and the Muslims spent the night killing them everywhere. Some of their important men were captured, and the Muslims took as spoil uncountable number of horses, possessions and weapons. The killed were more than 10,000. Among the plunder was a sword on which was engraved: "This is an Indian sword; its weight is

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in which were settled fighting Muslims, thus, they entered a world made by themselves, i.e., in which they were protected. It seems, moreover, that "circle" was the original signification of the word  (Hayy). See Seippel (p. XLVIII).

170 mithqals; for long, in the hand of the Prophet of Allāh himself (may Allāh praise him and have peace upon him) it struck (his enemies)". Al-Hasan sent it to al-Mu'izz li Dīn Allāh<sup>182</sup>, with two-hundred dignitaries of those dirty disbelievers<sup>183</sup>, shields, coats of mail and many weapons. Very few of the infidel escaped, and they embarked on their ships.

XXX

From the Book of

Jāmi' al-Funūn

Al-Ḥarrānī

(A.D. 1332)

He said: The land of the Rūs is a wide land but its cities are few and its inhabited places are isolated. Between one city and another there is a great distance. They are great nations who neither follow king nor law. They have gold. No stranger ever enters them without being killed. Their land is among mountains which surround it. From these mountains many springs come out, all of which

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182. Al-Mu'izz (952-75) was the fourth Egyptian Fatimid caliph with whom the golden age in the history of Fatimid Egypt began. See Hitti, Hist. of Arabs, 623.

183. عاج ('ilj) means "ass, wild ass, foreign to the Arabian race, unbeliever, strong and stout, hairy, and thickbearded." J. G. Hava, Arabic-English Dictionary (Beirut, 1915).

pour into the Lake Ṭūhā<sup>184</sup> which is a huge lake in the midst of which there is a high mountain where there are many antelopes and cheetahs. From its region the Dnieper River comes out from meadows.

## XXXI

From the Book of

Al-'Ibar wa Dīwān al-Mubtada'

wa al-Khabar

Ibn Khaldūn

(A.D. 1332-1406)

He said: When the Rūm adopted the Christian religion they converted their neighboring nations by persuasion or coercion. Some nations adopted it among whom were the Armenians whose ancestry goes back to Nahor<sup>185</sup>, the brother of Abraham (Peace be upon him). Their country is Armenia and its capital is Khilāṭ, and also the Georgians<sup>186</sup> who are among the peoples of the Rūm and their country is between Armenia and Constantinople to the north, in impregnable mountains. Among them also are the Circassians<sup>187</sup> who are

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184. طومی ; it can also be read "Tūhī", but I prefer to read it "Tuḥā" because it seems to be a corruption of طوما or طومى (Ṭumā) as Seippel suggests (p. XLIX). See also footnote above.

185. ناهور (Heb. נַחֹר). Gen. 11:26.

186. الكرج (Al-Kurj).

187. الجركشى (al-Jarkash).

in mountains on the eastern shore of the Sea of Pontus. And among them (as well) the Birjān, a great nation in the deep north; no information is known about them due to their remoteness. All these are Turkish peoples. The greatest of those nations who adopted it (Christianity) were the Franks.

And he said: And in the year 332/943, groups of Rūs went out in sea to the regions of Azerbaijan, and they entered the Kur River to Barda'ah in which there was the deputy of al-Marzubān ibn Muḥammad ibn Musāfir, the king of the Dailamites in Azerbaijan. He went out with multitudes of Dailamites and volunteers and fought them. But the Rūs defeated them and took the city. Then the Islamic armies came from all directions to fight them, but they fortified themselves in it (the city). Some of the populace stoned them, but they (the Rūs) expelled them (the citizens) from the city and killed whoever remained and looted their possessions and made free with their boys and women. Al-Marzubān convoked the people and advanced against them with 30,000 and fought them but he could not defeat them. Then he set an ambush one day and defeated them and killed their prince. The rest escaped to the fortress of the city. Al-Marzubān besieged them patiently. Then news came to him that Abu Abd-Allāh al-Ḥusayn ibn Sa'īd ibn Ḥamdān had reached Salamās and was advancing in the direction of Azerbaijan, to which he had been sent for the purpose of seizing it, by his cousin Nāṣir al-Dawlah. So, he equipped an army to besiege the Rūs at Barda'ah and he

himself marched to fight Ibn Ḥamdān. Then Ibn Ḥamdān departed, returning to his cousin for he had summoned him to Baghdad when Tūzūn had died. The army remained besieging the Rūs in Barda'ah until they fled the city and carried whatever they were capable of carrying and Allāh purged the country of them. And he said in another place: \*(The Rūs's conquest of the city of Barda'ah and al-Marzubān's victory over them). Those Rūs are a group of Turks and they are neighboring the country of the Rūm. They adopted the Christian religion a long time ago. Their country borders the country of Azerbaijan. A group of them embarked upon the sea in the year 332/943, then they went up from the sea into the Kur River and they ended up at the city of Barda'ah in the country of Azerbaijan in which was the deputy of al-Marzuban. He appeared to them with about 5,000 fighting men from the Dailamites and others, but the Rūs defeated them and killed the Dailamites and pursued them to the city and captured it.. They proclaimed surety and behaved well. Then the Islamic armies came from all directions but they could not defeat them. The commoners and the ruffians backed them up but when the armies went away the Russians treacherously killed them and looted their possessions and enslaved them.<sup>188</sup> That had

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188. From the previous paragraph we understand that the citizens of Barda'ah had backed the Muslim armies up by stoning the Rūs.

saddened the Muslims and al-Marzubān convoked the people to war. He marched with 30,000 (soldiers) and besieged the Russians and remained for a while fighting them. Then he prepared an ambush against them and advanced toward them. They came out against him and he simulated flight until they passed the place of the ambush, but his people continued to run away. Then he, with his brother and a companion, returned seeking death and the ambushers came out from behind them. The Russians and their prince were surrounded. Their remnants escaped to the city and fortified themselves in its fortress and they had already transferred to it their captives and booty. Al-Marzubān besieged them and they stood firm. Then, it came to pass, that Nāṣir al-Dawlah ibn Ḥamdān, the governor of Mosul, had sent his cousin Abu Abd-Allāh al-Ḥusayn ibn Sa'īd ibn Ḥamdān, in this year to capture Azerbaijan. News came to al-Marzubān that he (ibn Ḥamdān) had reached Salamās. So, he equipped an army against the Rūs and marched to fight ibn Ḥamdān. He fought him for days. Then his [the latter's] cousin Nāṣir al-Dawlah from Mosul recalled him and informed him of the death of Tūzūn and that he (Nāṣir) was marching toward Baghdad; and he ordered him to return and he returned. As for the Rūs, the army besieged them for several days, then pestilence befell them severely and they descended from the fortress at night and carried whatever they could of possessions and reached the Kur and embarked [on] their ships and went away



to their country, and Allāh has purged the country of them.

And he said: Then in the year 343/954 Sayf al-Dawlah entered the land of the Rūm and harried it mercilessly; and he killed Constantine, the son of the Domesticus among others. The Domesticus gathered the armies of the Rūm, the Rūs and the Bulgars and marched toward the frontier towns. Then Sayf al-Dawlah ibn Ḥamdān marched against him and they met at al-Ḥadāth. The Rūm were defeated and the Muslims let themselves go in killing and capturing them. The son-in-law of the Domesticus, some of his grand-sons and many of his patricians were captured; and Sayf al-Dawlah returned with victory and loot.

XXXII

From the Book of

'Iqd al-Jumān

Al-'Ayni

(A.D. 1360)

He said: A group of Rūs came by sea to the regions of Azerbaijan. They went toward Barda'ah and besieged it. When they defeated its people they killed them all, looted their possessions and carried away those women of theirs whom they considered beautiful. Then they turned to Marāghah and they found there much fruit and they ate it; then a severe pestilence

befell them and most of them died. And when one of them died they buried him with his arms and possessions which the Muslims later took away. Then al-Marzubān Muḥammad advanced against them, fought them and killed a great number of them in addition to the severe epidemic which befell them. And Allāh has purged that land of them.

## XXXIII

From the Book of

Nashq al-Azhār

Ibn Iyās

(A.D. 1516)

He said: The Rūs are a great nation of Turks. Their country is unhealthy, and it is near the Slavs. They are in an island surrounded by a lake. It is a fortress for them which repels their enemies. Yellow copper is brought from them to the lands of India and China. They have a king who sits on a bed of gold, and he is surrounded by forty maidens with censors of gold and silver loaded with rosemary incense.<sup>189</sup> And the people of this land are ruddy, blond and of tall stature; and they are the most evil creatures of Allāh Almighty, and they have a strange language.

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189. حصى لبان أخضر (al-ḥaṣālubān). It is found حصى لبان أخضر (ḥaṣā libān akhdār) -- Badger's English-Arabic Lexicon and حصلبان (ḥaṣalubān) -- Socrates Spiro, Arabic-English Dictionary. Both give the meaning of "rosemary" to the variants of this word.

Chapter Five  
The Conquest of Sidon by the Franks  
in the Year 504/1099-1100

From the Book of  
Al-Kāmil fī al-Ta'rīkh  
Ibn al-Athīr  
(A.D. 1160-1234)

He said: Then it was the year 504/1099-1100 (Notices concerning the conquest of the city of Sidon by the Franks). In this year, in Rabī' al-Ākhir<sup>1</sup>, the Franks conquered the city of Sidon on the Syrian coast. The reason for the conquest was that sixty Frankish ships arrived by sea at Syria, and they were loaded with men and equipment, and with them there were some of their kings. They came to perform pilgrimage to the Jerusalem, and by this pretense to invade the Muslims. Baldwin<sup>2</sup>, the King of Jerusalem, met with them and the plan was drawn between them that they would attack the land of the Muslims. They departed from Jerusalem and landed at the city of Sidon on the third of Rabī' al-Ākhir of this year and besieged it by land and sea. The Egyptian fleet was

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1. The fourth month of the Islamic calendar. This event then falls in A.D. 1099.
  2. **بغروين** (Baghdawīn); in modern French it is Baudoin.

stationed in Tyre; thus, it could not help Sidon. The Franks, then, made a wooden tower and fixed it well and made it such as to resist fire and stones; then they marched forward with it. When the people of the city saw that, their souls weakened and they feared that they would suffer as the people of Beirut had suffered. So, they sent their qāḍi with a group of their elders to the Franks to ask the King for surety. He gave them surety for their lives, possessions and soldiers. He also guaranteed that whoever wanted to stay with them would be safe and whoever wanted to depart would not be hindered. And he took an oath on it. The governor and a big party of the nobles of the city departed on the twentieth of Jamādā al-Ūlā<sup>3</sup> for Damascus, and a great number of people stayed in the city under surety. The siege had lasted for forty-seven days. Baldwin departed for Jerusalem, then returned to Sidon after a short while and imposed upon the Muslims who stayed there 20,000 dīnārs, thus, impoverishing them and draining their money away. \*(Notices concerning the conquest of the fortress of Al-Athārib<sup>4</sup> and others by the Franks). In this year, the governor of Antioch gathered his Frankish soldiers and mobilized the cavalry and the infantry and advanced toward the fortress of Al-Athārib, which is near the city of Aleppo, a distance of three parasangs. He besieged

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3. The fifth month of the Islamic calendar.

4. Southwest of Aleppo.

it and cut off supplies from it. The situation became distressing for the Muslims there and they made a hole in the fortress from which they intended to reach the tent of the governor of Antioch and kill him. When they did that and approached his tent, an Armenian youth sought protection from him and informed him of the plot. So, he took precautions against them and fought them fiercely until he conquered the fortress by force and killed 2,000 men of its people and captured the rest and took them prisoners. Then he moved to the fortress of Zardana<sup>5</sup> and besieged it, then conquered it and did with its people as he had done with the people of al-Athārib. When the people of Manbij<sup>5</sup> heard of that they departed from fear of the Franks; and so did the people of Bālis<sup>6</sup>. The Franks advanced to the two towns and did not find a single person in them and they turned back. Then a Frankish army moved toward the city of Sidon and its people asked them for surety. They gave them surety and occupied the city. Then the fear of the Muslims was great and their hearts came up into their throats<sup>7</sup> and they were certain that the Franks would conquer the rest of Syria

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5. Northeast of Aleppo.

6. Situated on the Euphrates (on latitude 36°).

7. **بلغت القلوب الحناجر** is an Arabic metaphore indicating extreme fear. **حناجر** is the plural of **حنجرة** (Larynx).

because of the absence of protection for it as well as of a repeller to drive them from it. The governors of the Muslim cities in Syria began to negotiate truce with them, but the Franks refused but did agree to make short-time agreements in return for tribute-payments. King Ridwān<sup>8</sup> of Aleppo reached an agreement with them to pay them 32,000 dīnārs in addition to horses and clothes; the ruler of Tyre pacified them with 7000 dīnārs; ibn Munqidh the ruler of Shayzar<sup>9</sup> with 4000 dīnārs; 'Ali al-Kurdi of Ḥamāh with 2000 dīnārs. The term of the truce would continue until harvest season. Then it came to pass that ships had departed from Egypt in which were merchants and a large quantity of merchandise. The ships of the Franks attacked them and captured them and took away the merchandise and carried the merchants away as prisoners. Then a group of the people of Aleppo went to Baghdad agitating against the Franks. When they arrived at Baghdad a great number of theologians and others joined them and went to the mosque of al-Sulṭān<sup>10</sup>.

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8. He is Ridwān ibn Tāj al-Dawlah Tutush, a Saljūq prince who ruled Aleppo from 1095-1113. Toward the end of the eleventh century Ridwan was won by the Assassins as convert. See Philip K. Hitti, An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades (New York, 1929), 82, 83. See also Hitti, Hist. of Arabs, 447, 635.
9. Shayzer, a castle on the Orontes in Northern Syria, was held by the banu-Munqidh after 1081. This ibn-Munqidh was 'Izz al-Dīn abu-al-'Asākir Sulṭān (d. 1154). The Memoirs of his nephew, Usāmah, are an important source of history from that period. The Memoirs are translated by Philip K. Hitti, An Arab-Syrian Gentleman. See footnote 8 above.
10. It is the mosque of the Saljūq Sultan Barkiyāruq (1094-1118).

They asked for help and interrupted prayer and destroyed the pulpit. The Caliph<sup>11</sup> promised them to send an army to the Holy War; and a pulpit was sent from the court of the Caliph to the mosque of al-Sultān. Next Friday (the delegation) went to the mosque of the Palace in the court of the Caliph together with the people of Baghdad. The door-keeper tried to prevent them from entering but they overcame him and entered the mosque and broke the window of the balcony and charged on the pulpit and broke it, and the Friday prayer was cancelled again. Then the Caliph ordered the Sultān to consider this breach and repair it. Only then did he ask his fellow princes to move to their lands and prepare for the Holy War; and he sent his son, King Mas'ūd, with Prince Mawdūd<sup>12</sup> the governor of Mosul. They went to Mosul to have the princes join them and advance to fight the Franks; and the year came to an end.

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11. Al-Mustazhir (1094-118)

12. Sharaf al-Dīn Mawdūd ibn Altuntikin. See Hitti, Arab Gentleman, 97, 98.

## II

From the Book of

Mir'āt al-Zamān

Ibn al-Jawzi

(A.D. 1186-1257)

He said: And in it (meaning the year 503/1109) Baldwin, the ruler of Jerusalem, and ibn Ṣanjīl<sup>13</sup> landed in Beirut, and Joscelin<sup>14</sup>, the ruler of Tell Bāshir marched on to aid them and reenforce them against Mawdūd who had expelled Jāwlī from Mosul and occupied al-Jazīrah by orders from the Sultan and advanced on Edessa<sup>15</sup>. Then the Egyptian fleet came with men and supplies and entered Beirut and its people were encouraged. Then Baldwin sought help from the Genoese and they came in forty ships. Then they marched on Beirut by land and sea and entered it by sword. They killed, looted and captured and they did there as they had done in Tripoli; and they chose the best of possessions and treasures for themselves. Then Baldwin departed and advanced against Sidon. He wrote to its people (asking them) to surrender the city, but they asked him to give them a delay for some specified length of time and he agreed. Then he received money from them and returned to Jerusalem for pilgrimage.

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13. ابن صنجيل. He is Raymond, Count of Toulouse (called Raymond of St. Gilles).

14. جوسلين (Jūsīn).

15. الرها (al-Ruhā'), in northern Syria.



And in it (the same year) Muḥammad Shāh<sup>16</sup> corresponded with Sukmān<sup>17</sup> the ruler of Armenia, Khilāṭ and Mayyāfāriqīn<sup>18</sup>, and Sharaf al-Dīn Mawdūd the ruler of Mosul and Najm al-Dīn Īl-Ghāzi the ruler of Mardīn suggesting cooperation in the Holy War against the Franks. They joined forces and they had a great multitude of people; and they said: We shall start with Edessa and when we achieve its conquest we shall advance toward Syria. They attacked it in Shawwāl<sup>19</sup> and besieged its people and cut off their supply. When this became known to the Franks Tancred<sup>20</sup>, the ruler of Antioch, ibn Ṣanjīl the ruler of Tripoli and Baldwin the ruler of Jerusalem joined forces and allied themselves to march toward Edessa to defend it and continue the war with patience. They all departed for Edessa. Tuḡtkīn<sup>21</sup> was

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16. Ruler of Iṣpahān.

17. **سکمان**; he is Sukmān (or Suqmān) al-Qubti, founder of the Shāh-Armin dynasty. See Hitti, Arab Gentleman, 118 n. 149.

18. **میافارقین**; a town inside (sic) a fortress, on the frontier between Armenia, the Jazīra, (and) Rūm. See Minorsky, Ḥudūd, 143.

19. The tenth month of the Islamic calendar.

20. **طنکری** (Ṭankari)

21. **طغتكین**. He is Atābeg Tuḡtigīn, ruler of Damascus. Formerly he was a slave of the Saljūq Sultan Tutush. See Hitti, Hist. of Arabs, 641.

informed (of this movement); he marched with his army toward al-Raqqah<sup>22</sup> and the fort of Ja'bar, and found the Franks on the Euphrates reluctant to cross it fearing the Muslims. This (situation) was communicated to the Muslims and they departed from Edessa for the Euphrates seeking (to fight) the Franks. They found out that the (Franksih) cavalry had already crossed the Euphrates with some of their equipment; and they attacked them killing, capturing and drowning them in the Euphrates. Their hands were full of loot, captives and horses; and the Franks returned to their centers. Tughtkīn was intending to join the Muslims against them, but when they retreated he went back to Damascus fearing an attack on it. Then the Muslims returned to Edessa, but the war was prolonged and they dispersed (and returned) to their lands. When Baldwin withdrew he made his way through al-Biqā'<sup>23</sup> capturing and killing. Then he returned to Sidon and attacked it and erected towers against it. Its people became certain of death and they sent out their qāḍi and a group of their eminent people; they asked for surety and he (Baldwin) offered it to them. Then the governor, the army and the people of the city departed for Damascus unhindered. Then he (Baldwin) returned to Jerusalem. It has been said that Sidon was conquered in the year 504/1100.

22. الرقة ; a town on the upper Euphrates.

23. It is Coele-Syria in classical literature.

## III

From the History of

Ibn al-'Amīd

(A.D. 1205-1273)

He said: And in the year 504/1100 the Franks conquered Sidon and Zardanā and fostered their power in the land of Syria, and all the coasts came into their hands.

## IV

From the Book of

Al-Mukhtasar fī Tarīkh al-Bashar

Abu al-Fidā'

(A.D. 1273-1331)

He said: Then it was the year 504/1099-1100. In this year the Franks conquered the city of Sidon in Rabī' al-Ākhir and occupied it by surety. And in it (the same year) the ruler of Antioch and the Franks who had joined him marched against al-Athārib which is near Aleppo and besieged it. Fighting continued between them until they conquered it at swordpoint and killed 1000 men of its people and carried away the rest as prisoners. Then they marched against Zardanaḥ and conquered it at sword point; the people of Zardanaḥ suffered as the people of al-Athārib had suffered.

Then the Franks marched against Manbij and Bālis and found them evacuated by their people, and they returned from there. Then King Riḍwān of Aleppo compromised with the Franks with 30,000 dīnārs to be paid to them with horses and clothes. The people of Syria feared the Franks and the rulers of the land paid them money and compromised with them.

## V

From the Book of

Tārīkh al-Islām

Al-Dhahabi

(A.D. 1274-1348)

He said: And in the year 504/1099-1100 Baldwin and ibn Ṣanjīl landed in Beirut; then the Genoese Franks came with forty ships and beseiged it and then took it at sword-point. Then they fought Sidon on the third day of Rabi' al-Ākhir and took it at sword-point after more than forty days. They gave surety to its people; some of them transferred to Damascus but most of the people stayed subjects of the Franks and a tax of 20,000 dīnārs was imposed on them.

## VI

From the Book of

Al-'Ibar wa Dīwān al-Mubtadawa al-Khabar

Ibn Khaldūn

(A.D. 1332-1406)

He said: Then the Franks occupied Sidon in Rabī' al-Ākhir of the year 504/1099. That happened when a Frankish fleet of sixty ships loaded with men and equipment-and in them there were some of their (the Franks') Kings-came with the intention of performing pilgrimage and invading. It (the fleet) joined Baldwin, the King of Jerusalem, and attacked Sidon by land and sea while the Egyptian fleet was at Tyre, thus, unable to come with help. Then they advanced against the walls with fortified wooden towers. Their (the people of Sidon's) morale weakened fearing that they would suffer as the people of Beirut had suffered. Therefore, they asked for surety which the Franks gave to them in (the month of) Jamādā al-Ūlā. They departed for Damascus after a siege of forty-seven days; and many people stayed in the city under surety and Baldwin returned to Jerusalem.

And he said: Then Tancred of Antioch mobilized his army and marched against the fort of al-Athārib, three miles

from Aleppo, and besieged it then conquered it by force and killed and captured many. Then he marched against the fort of Zardanā and did likewise. The people of Manbij and Bālis fled from their cities. Then an army of Franks marched against the city of Sidon and occupied it by surety. Then the Muslims feared that the Franks might conquer all Syria; so, they negotiated with them to conclude a truce.

Chapter Six  
Notices Concerning Some Northern Lands and Seas

I

From the Book of  
Al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik

Ibn Khurdādhbih

(A.D. 912)

He said: As for the sea which is beyond the Slavs on which is situated the city of Thule, no ship or boat sails it nor anything comes from it.

II

From the Book of

Al-Buldān

Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamadāni

(A.D. 903)

He said: And (in) the Sixth Region there are the Franks and other nations. And in it there are women whose custom is to cut off their breast and burn it (i.e., its place) lest it grows.

And he said: And the Fourth (Sea) is between Rūmiyah and Khwārizm, and there is a city in it called Thule and no

boat ever anchored on it.

### III

From the Book of

Rasm al-Arḍ

Ibn al-Bahlūl

He said: \*(the islands in the Outer Western and Northern Sea)\* Among those is the island of Canturia<sup>1</sup> and its area is 2 parts by 1 1/2 parts. Its middle is on longitude 8°5' and latitude 10°30'; the island of Canaria<sup>2</sup> which has 1 part by 1 1/4 parts; its middle is on longitude 7°4' and latitude 11°4'; the island of Hārā<sup>3</sup> which is 1 1/2 parts by 1 part; its middle is on longitude 8°5' and latitude 13°5'; the island of Kasāfāriyā<sup>4</sup>: it is 1 1/2 parts by 1 part; its middle is on longitude 6°5' and latitude 12°30'; the island of Dā'ūtūlā, it is 1 1/2 parts by 1 part and its middle is on longitude 8°10' and latitude 13°40'; the island of Aqāntūs which is round (in shape): it has 1 1/2 parts and its middle is on longitude 8°20' and latitude 16°20'; the island of Yūbārniyā<sup>5</sup>: there are many cities on it; its beginning is on longitude 17°30' and latitude

1. قنطوريا (Qanṭūryā): I.e., Canterbury, (Gr. Κεντρούρια) - Seippel, p. LIV.

2. قاناريا (Qānāryā) - ibid.

3. هارا (Gr. Ἡρακλῆος) - ibid.

4. كسافاريا (Gr. Κασαφάρια) - ibid.

5. يوبارينا (Gr. Ἰουεργία). Another variant given by Seippel (p. LIV) is نوبازيتا (Nūbāzīta); it is possibly "Hibernia" (i.e., Ireland).



$53^{\circ}5'$  and crosses longitude  $14^{\circ}40'$ , and latitude  $57^{\circ}30'$ , then crosses longitude  $18^{\circ}40'$  and latitude  $58^{\circ}50'$ , then crosses longitude  $16^{\circ}30'$  and latitude  $61^{\circ}40'$ , then crosses longitude  $14^{\circ}5'$  and latitude  $61^{\circ}5'$ , then crosses longitude  $11^{\circ}10'$  and latitude  $61^{\circ}30'$ , then to longitude  $12^{\circ}5'$  and latitude  $60^{\circ}30'$ , then it crosses the place where it starts, on longitude  $17^{\circ}30'$  and latitude  $53^{\circ}5'$ . The island of  $\bar{U}ly\bar{a}$  has many cities; it begins with longitude  $18^{\circ}30'$  and latitude  $51^{\circ}30'$  then passes as does al- $Quw\bar{a}rah$  then through latitude  $51^{\circ}5'$  then it passes through longitude  $18^{\circ}5'$  and latitude  $52^{\circ}30'$ , then passes through longitude  $19^{\circ}45'$  and latitude  $52^{\circ}40'$  then passes through longitude  $22^{\circ}40'$  and latitude  $55^{\circ}30'$ , then passes through longitude  $22^{\circ}5'$  and latitude  $56^{\circ}5'$ , then passes through longitude  $23^{\circ}5'$  and latitude  $56^{\circ}30'$ , then passes through longitude  $22^{\circ}$  and latitude  $57^{\circ}40'$ , then passes through longitude  $23^{\circ}5'$  and latitude  $58^{\circ}10'$ , then passes through longitude  $21^{\circ}45'$  and latitude  $59^{\circ}15'$ , then passes through longitude  $23^{\circ}5'$  and latitude  $59^{\circ}10'$ , then passes through longitude  $22^{\circ}40'$  and latitude  $59^{\circ}45'$ , then passes through longitude  $27^{\circ}30'$  and latitude  $53^{\circ}$ , then passes through longitude  $26^{\circ}45'$  and latitude  $59^{\circ}20'$ , then passes through longitude  $27^{\circ}15'$  and latitude  $59^{\circ}40'$ , then passes as does al- $Quw\bar{a}rah$ , then passes through latitude  $59^{\circ}10'$ , then passes through longitude  $31^{\circ}10'$  and latitude  $60^{\circ}15'$ , then passes through longitude  $28^{\circ}20'$  and latitude  $60^{\circ}30'$ , then passes through longitude  $27^{\circ}5'$  and

latitude  $61^{\circ}30'$ , then passes through longitude  $28^{\circ}30'$  and latitude  $60^{\circ}45'$ , then passes through longitude  $20^{\circ}20'$  and latitude  $61^{\circ}15'$ , then passes through longitude  $20^{\circ}25'$  and latitude  $60^{\circ}40'$ , then passes through longitude  $19^{\circ}20'$  and latitude  $60^{\circ}40'$ , then passes through longitude  $19^{\circ}45'$ , then passes through longitude  $18^{\circ}5'$  and latitude  $60^{\circ}5'$ , then passes through longitude  $16^{\circ}40'$  and latitude  $59^{\circ}40'$ , then it passes as does al-Ṭaylasan through longitude  $16^{\circ}10'$  and latitude  $58^{\circ}5'$ , then passes as does al-Quwārah, then it passes through latitude  $57^{\circ}20'$ , then through longitude  $19^{\circ}30'$  and latitude  $58^{\circ}5'$ , then it passes through the place where it started which is on longitude  $18^{\circ}30'$  and latitude  $51^{\circ}30'$ .

In the island of Thule there is a city which starts with longitude  $26^{\circ}20'$  and latitude  $63^{\circ}5'$ , then it passes, as does al-Quwārah, through latitude  $60^{\circ}5'$ , then it passes through longitude  $30^{\circ}5'$  and latitude  $62^{\circ}10'$ , then passes through longitude  $32^{\circ}20'$ , and latitude  $63^{\circ}10'$ , then passes as does al-Quwārah through latitude  $64^{\circ}40'$ , then passes through longitude  $26^{\circ}20'$  and latitude  $63^{\circ}5'$  which is the place where it has started.

In the island of Saqandiyā<sup>6</sup> there is a city which starts from longitude  $42^{\circ}30'$  and latitude  $59^{\circ}40'$ , then passes, as does al-Quwārah, through latitude  $59^{\circ}45'$ , then passes through

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6. سقنديا (Gr. Σκαυδία) (Scandia)

longitude  $46^{\circ}5'$  and latitude  $59^{\circ}45'$  then passes, as does al-Quwārah, through latitude  $60^{\circ}30'$ , then it passes through the place where it starts on longitude  $42^{\circ}30'$  and latitude  $59^{\circ}40'$ .

The island of Amāzānūz<sup>7</sup> in which is the City of Men: Its beginning is on longitude  $49^{\circ}40'$  and latitude  $64^{\circ}45'$ , then it passes through longitude  $50^{\circ}20'$  and latitude  $62^{\circ}20'$ , then passes through longitude  $54^{\circ}50'$  and latitude  $65^{\circ}20'$ , then passes through longitude  $54^{\circ}20'$  and latitude  $66^{\circ}40'$ , then it passes through the place where it has started on longitude  $49^{\circ}40'$  and latitude  $64^{\circ}45'$ .

The island of Amāzānūs on which is the City of Women begins with longitude  $50^{\circ}30'$  and latitude  $61^{\circ}10'$ , then passes through longitude  $52^{\circ}30'$  and latitude  $61^{\circ}20'$ , then it passes, as al-Ṭaylasān does, through longitude  $50^{\circ}25'$  and latitude  $62^{\circ}40'$ , then it passes through the place where it starts on longitude  $50^{\circ}30'$  and latitude  $61^{\circ}10'$ .

And he said: And among the springs and rivers which are beyond the Seventh Region is a spring in the island of Thule which begins at longitude  $27^{\circ}20'$  and latitude  $63^{\circ}20'$ , from which a river flows and passes through the city of Athlī and pours into the sea at longitude  $31^{\circ}5'$  and latitude  $62^{\circ}30'$ .

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7. اَمَزَانُوس (Gr. Ἀμαζόνες and Ἀμαζώνες). It is the land of the Amazons.

## IV

From the Book of

Murūj al-Dhahab

Al-Mas'ūdi

(A.D. 947)

He said: Then they (meaning the wisemen) looked into the latitude and found that civilization ends north of the Equator at the island of Thule which is in Britain<sup>8</sup> where the length of daytime is 20 hours.

And he said: And I have found in some books added to those of al-Kindi<sup>9</sup> and his disciple al-Sarakhsi<sup>10</sup> the companion of al-Mu'taḍid bi-Allāh<sup>11</sup> that at the end of civilization, in the north, there is a great lake, some of it is under the North Pole, and near it there is a city after which there is no civilization and it is called Thule; and I have found in some treatises of banu-al-Munajjim a mention of this lake.

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8. بريطانية (Barīṭānyah)

9. Abu-Yūsuf ibn Ishāq, "was born in al-Kūfah about the middle of the ninth century and flourished in Baghdād". He was a philosopher, astrologer, alchemist, optician and music theorist. See Hitti, Hist. of Arabs, 370.
10. Aḥmad ibn al-Ṭayyib; he accompanied al-Mu'taḍid on a military expedition to Palestine in 884-5 and kept a careful diary of the expedition. See Rosenthal, Muslim Historiography, 152.
11. Al-Mu'taḍid (892-902) was an Abbasid Caliph.

## V

From the Book of  
Al-Tanbīh wa al-Ishrāf  
 Al-Mas'ūdi

He said: According to Ptolemy the extent of civilization northward is the island of Thule in the extreme north of the Western Sea. Its width as from the average of daytime in the north is 63 parts. He also relates that from Marinus<sup>12</sup> in his discussion on the boundaries of the civilized world.

And he said: From the land of Burtas the black fox skins are carried, and they are the most noble and most expensive of furs. Some of them are red and some white which cannot be distinguished from al-Fanak and al-Khalanji, and its worst kind is the one known as al-A'rābi. The black kind cannot be found anywhere else in the world except in this region and the regions nearby. The kings of the non-Arabian nations boast of wearing these skins which are used for hats and furs. The black kind reach very high prices and are carried to Bāb al-Abwāb and to Bardha'ah and to other (places) in the land of Khurasan. It may also be carried from the land of the Slavs to the country of al-Jarbi<sup>13</sup>

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12. مارينوس (Marīnūs): He is Marinus of Tyre, a geographer who flourished in the mid-second century. See Hitti, History of Syria (New York, 1951), 320.

13. See footnote 51, p. 92 above.

because of the former's connection with al-Jarbi. Then it is carried to Frankland and Spain. Then the black and red kinds of these skins are taken to the land of Maghrib, thus, some make the mistake of thinking that they come from Spain, and Frankland and the land of the Slavs which are connected to it (Spain).

## VI

From the Book of

Al-'Ajā'ib

(Attributed to al-Mas'ūdī)

The author of the book said: The Slavs are several nations, some of them are Christian, some profess Heathenism and worship the sun. They have a great river<sup>14</sup> of sweet water, which flows from the north to the south. They also have another great river which flows from west to east until it joins another great river coming from the region of the Bulgars. They have many rivers, all of them are in the north. They have no salt sea because their country is far from the sun, and hence, their water is sweet, because those (seas) which are near the sun become salty. Whatever (lands) which are beyond theirs to the north are uninhabitable

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14. بحر (baḥr) is a "sea" or any "great river". The Nile, for example, is called the "Nile Sea" even in modern times.

because of their cold and abundance of earthquakes. Most of their tribes are Heathen who burn themselves with fire and worship it. They have many cities and temples which have suspended bells which they ring like church bells. There is a nation among them, between the Slavs and the Franks, who believe in the religion of the Ṣābians<sup>15</sup> and profess the worship of planets. They have fine minds and trades of all kinds. They fight the Slavs, the Turks and the Burjāns. They have seven feasts in the year named after the planets; the greatest one is the feast of the sun.

And he said: As for the Franks, they also are descendants of Japheth. Their kingdom is large and they have kingdoms which have been gathered together by one king. It was mentioned that the Franks had ninety cities ruled by one king, and their greatest city is Drywah<sup>16</sup>. They are also Christians, and today they are in fourteen tribes. Beyond them are many races who belong largely to the Slavs and they have a great domain and civilization. They fight the Rūm and the Lombards, and they practice magic. Among them there are Christians, Heathen and Zindīqs<sup>17</sup>, as well as some who burn themselves.

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15. They are the Mandeans, known as the Christians of St. John. This sect still exists in the south of Iraq. See Hitti, Hist. of Arabs, 233, 357-8.
16. دريوه . Other variant readings given by Seippel (p. LVI) are دوروه (Dūr?wh) and برنزه (Br?zh).
17. The term Zindīq was used by early Arab writers to designate Muslims harboring Persian, and particularly Manichaean dogmas. See Hitti, Hist. of Arabs, 359.

## VII

From the Book of

Al-Tafhim fi Awā'il Şinā'at

al-Tanjīm

Al-Bayrūni

(A.D. 973-1048)

He said: As for civilization, Ptolemy claimed that its farthest extent is the island of Thule whose latitude approaches the exact (summit) of the Great Incline and it is approximately 63 parts. But the nations which are between the end of the Seventh Region and that end are more like beasts than they are like men; and their lives are beyond the limits of distress.

## VIII

From the Book of

Al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik

Al-Bakri

(d.A.D. 1094)

He said: As for the beginning of the width of the country, it is from the region of the flowing place of the Nile in Abyssinia, a distance of twenty nights (journey) from the zenith, southward from Aden, up to Thule, the island



which is situated below the line which extends to the extreme north; it is beyond the land of the Slavs and the Khazars.

And he said: As for the other sea which comes after the South Sea in size, it is the North Sea which extends from north to south. It begins at longitude 1 and extends to longitude 17 in the shape of a hood, until its shape becomes that of a sector of a circle, then it passes on convexwise until its shape becomes that of mist (sic). There are no cities on this sea except the city of Thule. No one sails in it due to the roughness of its nature and due to its darkness and the thickness of the air on it.

## IX

From the Book of  
Fī Dhikr al-Aqālīm

Al-Zayyāt

He said: And after this region (meaning the Seventh Region) there are many inhabited countries up to latitude  $63^{\circ}$ , in which civilization is continuous, and it is inhabited by Heathen, Slavs, Patzinaks, Alans, Tughuzghuz<sup>18</sup> and Rūs. Their longest daytime is 20 hours and the shortest is 4 hours.

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18. Possibly the Ghuzz or the Tungus.

From the beginning of civilization, after the Equator in the south, to the end of civilization after the Seven Regions in the north parallel to the aforementioned Heathen, Slavs and Rūs, there are 79°.

And he said: Then the Western Ocean Sea comes down to the land of the Franks then to the land of the Slavs going eastward to the lands of the Turks and the Tughuzghuz, then to the barrier of Gog Magog where it is connected with the Dark Sea -- which is known as (the Sea of) Darkness -- in which there are many great unknown islands. Among its great islands are the islands of Awbāsuh<sup>19</sup> and Uliā<sup>20</sup> which is in the northern part of Spain. And in it (the sea) is the island of Thule which is to the north of the land of the Slavs; there are also the two islands of Women and Men, who are a nation that segregates women from men because of their jealousy for them.

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19. Seippel (P. LVII) suggests that this is a corruption of نرباغة (Nurbāghah) or نرباجة (Nurbājah), i.e., Norway.

20. On the coast of Galicia.

## X

From the Book of  
Nuzhat al-Mushtāq

Al-Idrīsī

(A.D. 1166)

He said: And in this sea (meaning the Western Ocean Sea) there is the island of Sheep which is a great island surrounded by darkness. It has uncountable number of sheep which are small in size; and no one can eat their meat because of its bitterness. Those who were deluded have related that (report) also. After it comes the island of Rāqā<sup>21</sup> which is the island of birds. It is said that in it (the island) there is a kind of bird which resembles the eagles. They are red and have claws by which they prey on the beasts of the sea; and they do not leave this island. And it is said that in it (the island) there are fruits which resemble the large figs which, when eaten, counteract all kinds of poison. The author of the book of Al-ʿAjāʿib has related that a Frankish king had been informed about that (i.e., the fruits) and he dispatched a ship to fetch him some of that fruit and to hunt for him some of those birds, because

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21. راقا . Another variant (See Seippel, p. LVII-LVIII)  
is لاقاه (Lāqah).

he had knowledge concerning their blood and gal-vesicles; but the ship which he dispatched was wrecked and did not return to him. And among them (meaning the islands of the Ocean Sea) is the island of Shetland<sup>22</sup> whose length is fifteen days (journey) and whose width is ten days (journey). In it there were three large cities where there are people who inhabit them. Ships used to pass by them, stop and buy ambergris and colored stones. But evil befell the inhabitants of that country and they fought each other until most of them perished. Some groups of them transferred to the shores of the sea on the great land of the Rūm where there is now a great number of its (the island's) inhabitants. We shall mention this island when we mention the island of Ireland. In this sea there is the island of Lāqah<sup>23</sup>; it is said that in it there are trees of odorless aloes-wood. But if it is taken and carried in the sea, its odor becomes good. It is heavy and black. Merchants used to go to it (the island) and bring the aloes-wood from it to sell it in the Far West, to the kings there. It is also mentioned that it (the island) was inhabited with many people, but it was destroyed and snakes became abundant in it such that no one can enter it now for this reason.

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22. الشاقلند (al-Shāṣland)

23. See also Footnote 20 above. This, probably, is the island of Lewis (Liódhus), one of the Hebrides islands.

And he said: (The first part of the Seventh Region). This first part of the Seventh Region is a completely dark sea. The whole of its islands are obscure and uninhabited. Its largest island is Ireland, which was mentioned before; between its upper end and Britain there are three and a half water-courses.<sup>24</sup> Between its lower end and the waste island of Scotia<sup>25</sup> there are two water-courses. The author of the Book of al-'Ajā'ib mentions that there were three cities in it which were inhabited. Ships used to stop in them and pass by them buying ambergris and colored stones from the inhabitants. One of them (the natives) wanted to reign over the people and he fought them with his relatives and they fought him. So, enmity spread among them and they destroyed each other. Some of them transferred to the shore of the Big Land; and their cities were destroyed and none of the inhabitants remained in them. The first part of the Seventh Region is completed and Praise be to Allāh.

And he said: From the edge of the waste island of Scotia to the edge of the island of Ireland there are two water-courses on the west, and we have already mentioned that.

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24. ثلاثة بحار ونصف, apparently units of maritime distance measure.

25. سقوسية (Siqūsiyah), i.e., Scotland.

From the edge of the island of England to the island of D(?)n(?)s<sup>26</sup> there is one water-course. From the northern edge of Scotia to the island of Iceland there are two-thirds of a water-course. Between the fringe of Iceland and the island of Ireland there is one water-course. Similarly between the eastern edge of Iceland and the island of Norway<sup>27</sup> there are twelve miles. The length of the island of Iceland is 400 miles and its width is 150 miles. We shall mention these islands later with the help of Allāh Almighty and the excellence of His good order.

The second part of the Seventh Region has been completed, and Praise be to Allāh. It will be followed by the third part if Allāh Almighty wishes.

(The third part of the Seventh Region): In the third part of this Seventh Region is the coast of the lands of Poland<sup>28</sup>, Ziudadah<sup>29</sup>, Finmark, and the peninsula of Denmark and Norway. We shall mention these coasts and islands as we have done before, with the help of Allāh Almighty. Among

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26. دنس, Seippel (p. LX) suggests that it is the Isle of Man (Menavianis).
27. نرواغة (Nurwāghah).
28. بولونية (Būlūniyah), either Poland or, starting from the English Channel to go northeastward toward Denmark, it may be Boulogne.
29. زوارة ; probably, but unlikely, Sweden.

these is the city of Verden<sup>30</sup> which is on its river. Between it and the sea there are fifteen miles. Between the city of Verden and the city of Niūburk<sup>31</sup> there are twenty-five miles. Between Verden and the Elbe<sup>32</sup> River there are 100 miles. Between the Elbe River and the beginning of the peninsula which is called Denmark there are sixty miles. The peninsula of Denmark itself is circular in shape and sandy. It has four important cities and many villages and flourishing and protected anchorages. Between the edge of the peninsula and the city of Alsey<sup>33</sup>, to the left of the incoming, there are twenty-five miles. It is a small and civilized city with (well) established markets and permanent buildings; and it is on the sea coast. Between it (Alsey) and the harbor of Turdīrah<sup>34</sup> there are fifty miles; it is a harbor that is well protected against wind and has (many) buildings. From this harbor to the harbor of Ḥawn<sup>35</sup> there are 100 miles, and this harbor is well protected from wind;

30. وردة (Wardah), a city on the Aller River.

31. نيو بورك Other variants given by Seippel (p. LX) are نيوبورك (Nayubarburk) and نيونبرك (Nayunburk). It is identified by Seippel as Nienburg on the Weser River.

32. البية (Albah)

33. السية (Alsiyah)

34. طرديرة ; Seippel (p. LX) suggests it to be Tonder, on the west coast of Denmark.

35. I.e., Hafnia (Copenhagen).

in it there are wells of fresh water. Between this harbor and the harbor of Vandilskagi<sup>36</sup> there are 200 miles; it is a well populated harbor. From this harbor one enters the island of Norway. Between them there is a strait of one-half water-course in length. Between this harbor and the city of Horsens<sup>37</sup> there are 200 miles. This is a nice small city. Between it and the Fort of Lund<sup>38</sup> there are eighty miles. Between this fort and the city of Slesvik<sup>39</sup> there are 100 miles. Between it (Slesvik) and the beginning of the peninsula there are twelve miles. The circumference of the peninsula, therefore, is 750 miles. Between the beginning of this peninsula and the city of Jūtah<sup>40</sup> there are 100 miles. It is a small and civilized city with markets and buildings. Between it and the city of Landsūdun<sup>41</sup> there are 100 miles. It is a large and prosperous city. Between this city and the River Quṭalw<sup>42</sup> on which is a city called Sigtun<sup>43</sup> there are 190 miles. The city of Sigtun is a beautiful city. Between it and the city of Kalmar<sup>44</sup> there are 200 miles. We shall

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36. وَنْدِلْسْقَادَا (Wandilseqādah), in the extreme north of Denmark.

37. هُرْس نَس (Hurs Nas)

38. لَنْدُونَا (Lundūnah). Older names are Lundona and Lundia.

39. سَلِسْبُولِي (Salisbūli). Seippel (p. LXI) suggests that the termination وَيَق has been corrupted into وَلِي .

40. جَوْتَا . Possibly Gothland or Goteborg or even Jutland.

41. لَنْدِسْوَرْن . Possibly Landskrona.

42. قُطْلُو . Gutelw (Seippel, p. LXII).

43. سِقْطُون (Siqtūn)

44. قَلِمَار (Qalmār)



mention the remainder of this coast in detail with the help of Allāh and His succour.

Let us return now and say that from the coastal city of Jūtah to the city of Ziwādah<sup>45</sup> to the east there are 100 miles. The city of Ziwādah is a big and cosmopolitan city and its territory was named after it. This land is scarce in civilization and has much cold and ice. Between Ziwādah and the city of Albah<sup>46</sup> there are 100 miles eastward. To the east of it, (a distance) of 100 miles is the city of Kemi<sup>47</sup>. Between Kemi and the sea there are 100 miles. Opposite to it in the north, on the Sea of Darkness, is the city of Landsūndun; and from the city of Landsūndun to the river of Quṭalw, and it is also called Quṭarlu, on which is the city of Sigtun (situated), there are 190 miles. Between the Quṭarlū River, also, and the city of Kalmar there are 200 miles. We shall discuss the other coasts later. The Quṭarlū River is named after a city on it. It is a great river that passes from west to east and empties in the Dark Sea. Between the mouths of the two arms of this river there are 300 miles. As for the great island of Norway, most of it (is) wasteland; it

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45. See Footnote 28 above.

46. Possibly Elbing on the Baltic.

47. قِمِيَّة (Qīmiyyah): A town on the extreme northern coast of the Gulf of Bothnia.

is a large country with two tips. One of them is connected from the east with the peninsula of Denmark and it is opposite to its harbor, Vandilskagi. Between them there is a small strait of about one-half water-course. The other tip is connected to the great coast of the land of Finmark. In this island there are three prosperous cities. Two of these cities are in the land of Finmark and the third city is in the peninsula of Denmark. All of these cities are similar in characteristics. Their income is scarce and their livelihood is strained because of the abundance of rain and the constant changes in weather. They sow their plants and reap them while green; then they dry them in houses where they light fire, by reason of the scarcity of sun-shine. In this island there are huge sized trees which do not exist abundantly anywhere else. And it is said that in this island there is a savage nation that lives in wilderness, and their heads are stuck to their shoulders, and they have no necks at all. They dwell in trees where they use their hollow insides as houses to live in. Their food is acorns and chestnuts. In this island there is the animal which is called "cheetah"; it is found in abundance but it is smaller in size than the Russian cheetah and we have mentioned that before. The third part of the Seventh Region has been completed, and Praise be to Allāh. It will be followed by the fourth part if Allāh Almighty wishes.

\*(The fourth part of the Seventh Region). In this fourth part of the Seventh Region are most of the land of the Russians, the land of Finmark, the land of Tavastehus<sup>48</sup>, Estland<sup>49</sup> and the land of the Heathen. Most of these lands are waste and wilderness, obscure villages and constant snow. Their cities are few. As for the land of Finmark, it is a land of many villages, buildings and sheep. It has no prosperous city except the city of Abūdhah<sup>50</sup> and the city of Kalmar which are two great cities, but nomadism is common in them and misery is distressing their inhabitants. And in them (the cities) food is so scarce that it is less than sufficient for them. Rain is continually and constantly falling on them. From the city of Kalmar westward to the city of Sigtun (the distance) is 200 miles. The king of Finmark owns cities and inhabited regions in Norway which has been mentioned before. Between the city of Kalmar and the second arm of the Quṭarlū River there are eighty miles. And between the Quṭarlū River and the city of Daghwādah<sup>51</sup> there are 100 miles. Daghwādah is a huge and prosperous city which is on the mouth of the sea, and it is thought of as being part of the land of Tavastehus. This

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48. **طبست** (Ṭabast)

49. **إستلاندة** (Istlāndah), i.e., Estonia.

50. **ابوزة**. Identified by Seippel (p. LXIII) as Åbo. The author is, obviously, identifying Finmark with Finland. Finmark, therefore, in this text should not be understood as Finmark of the northern Scandinavian peninsula.

51. **دغواره**, possibly the island of Dagö (Dageyden) off the coast of Estonia.

land is of many villages and much prosperity, but its towns are few. This land is colder than the land of Finmark: Ice and rain do not cease not even for a twinkling of an eye. Between the city of Anhū<sup>52</sup> and the city of Daghwādah there are 200 miles. Anhū is a beautiful, majestic and prosperous city, and it is in Estland. ---

In the Dark Sea there are many uninhabited islands. There are two inhabited islands in it called the two islands of the Heathen Amazons. The western island is inhabited by men only and there is not one woman in it. In the other island there are women only and no man is with them. Every year, in the spring, the men cross the channel between them with their boats and each man goes to his woman and has sexual intercourse with her and stays with her for about a month. Then the men depart for their island and stay in it until the same time of the next year, then they go to the island where their women are and do with them as they had done in the previous year, i.e., the man has sexual intercourse with his wife and stays with her for a complete month then returns to the island where he dwells. And all of them do the same. This is a well known custom of theirs and an established tradition among them. The nearest place to reach them is from the city of Anhū, for between them there are three water-courses. And it is

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52. انهو . See Birkeland, p. 151, n. 55.

possible to reach them from the city of Kalmar and from the city of Dagö. It is almost impossible to reach these islands due to the abundance of fog in this sea and due to its extreme darkness and the lack of light in it.

The fourth part of the Seventh Region is completed, and Praise be to Allāh.

## XI

From the Book of

Baṣṭ al-Ard

Ibn Saʿīd

(A.D. 1208)

He said: To the north of this second part (of civilization beyond the Regions) there is the island of Ḥarmūsah<sup>53</sup>. Its length is about twelve days (journey) and its width in the middle is about four days (journey). Good sanāqir<sup>54</sup> are brought from it. Its middle is on longitude 28° and latitude 58°. There are many islands around it where the sanāqir are found. To its west is the island of white sanāqir: Its length from west to east is about seven days (journey) and its width is about four. From it and from the small northern islands the white sanāqir are brought, then carried

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53. هرموسة. I.e., Denmark. Seippel (pp. LXIV-LXV).

54. السنافر

from there to the Sultan of Egypt. The revenue from them for his treasury is 1000 dīnārs. If they bring them dead 500 dīnārs would be paid to them. And there is the white bear which enters the sea and swims and catches fish. The sanāqir snatch away whatever it (the bear) leaves out or neglects; and thus they live for there is no bird there due to the severity of cold. The skins of these bears are soft and they are brought to Egypt as presents.

And he said: And in this part (meaning the third part of civilization beyond the Regions) the city of women. Thickets are surrounding it.<sup>55</sup> Its longitude is  $44^{\circ}$  and its latitude is  $9^{\circ}$  (different) from the Seventh Region. No one reigns over them except a woman. In these thickets they have male-slaves. When night comes each male-slave knocks at the door of his mistress and spends the night with her. When dawn comes he goes away to his place. When a woman gives birth to a boy she kills him; but if she gives birth to a girl she lets her live. No man appears in their city at all. In the Ocean Sea, which is in this northern region, is the island of women. Its length from east to west, with an inclination southward, is about 250 miles; and its width in the middle is about 120 miles. Its middle is on longitude  $38^{\circ}$  and latitude  $60^{\circ}$  from the Equator. To the east of it is the island of men.

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55. الشعارى حدقة بها

Between the two islands there is a channel of ten miles. Its (the islands) width in the middle is about 170 miles. These men do not get together with the aforementioned women except for one month every year, in the time of the equinox. Then the men embark in their boats for the island of Woman. Each man knows his woman and goes unto her for a period of one month, then returns to the island of men. If a woman gives birth to a male she brings him up until he approaches manhood, then she sends him to their island. If she gives birth to a female she lets her live with the women. To the east of these two islands there is the great island of the Slavs where (there is) no civilization beyond it, eastward and northward, in the Ocean Sea. Its length is about 700 miles and its width in the middle is about 330 miles. In it there are many mountains, rivers, cities, prosperous places and people. It is said that they still are Heathen and fire-worshippers, and they consider nothing more useful than it (the fire) due to the severity of cold. Crops in this island and its like are not dried up in the sun, but they are dried up by smoke and by putting them close to fire. The author of the Book of Roger<sup>56</sup> has mentioned that there are people in that land whose heads are stuck to their shoulders, and they mostly dwell in big trees, which they hollow out and enter. The capital of

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56. I.e., al-Idrīsī.

this island is the city of Burghārīnā<sup>57</sup> after which the Bulgars are named, for it is said their origin is from this city. It is on the Ocean Sea, in the island where longitude 45°30' and latitude 57°.

## XII

From the Book of

Āthār al-Bilād

Al-Qazwīni

(A.D. 1283)

He said: Slesvik<sup>58</sup> is a very great city on the coast of the Ocean Sea. There are springs of sweet water in it. Its inhabitants worship Sirius except a few who are Christians and they have a church there. Al-Ṭurṭūshi<sup>59</sup> related that they had a feast in which they all gather to glorify their deity, to eat and to drink. If someone slaughters a sacrifice he erects a post in the door of his house and puts the sacrifice on it whether it was a cow, a ram, a billy-goat or a swine in order to let the people know that he has sacrificed it in glorification of his deity. The land has few resources. Most of their food is fish for it is abundant

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57. برغاريئا, certainly the city of Bulgar in Great Bulgaria.  
 58. سلسويق (Salshawīq), in Denmark.  
 59. He is Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn al-Walīd, born at Tortosa (1059-1060) and died in Alexandria in 1126 or 1129. See George Sarton, Introduction to the History of Science, Vol. II, Part I (Baltimore, 1931), 264.



there. If boys are born to one of them he throws them in the sea in order that he may be relieved of their expenses. It is also said that among them the woman has the right to divorce; the woman can divorce herself whenever she wants. They have artificial antimony which can never be removed when it is put on; and it increases the beauty of men and women. And he said: I never heard more ugly songs than the songs of the people of Slesvik, for they are a mumbling that comes out of their mouths like the barking of dogs and even worse.

And he said: And the city of Women is a large city and wide in area; it is in an island in the Western Sea. Al-Ṭurtūshi said: Its inhabitants are women, and men have no authority over them. They ride horses and fight all by themselves. They have great courage in combat. They have slaves; and each slave frequents, during the night, his mistress and stays with her all night, then rises at dawn and leaves secretly. If one of them gives birth to a male she kills him immediately, but if she gives birth to a female she allows her to live. And al-Ṭurtūshi said: The city of Women is a fact; there is no doubt about it.

And he said: Burjān<sup>60</sup> is a lowland in the north. The minimum of daytime in it is four hours, and the night is twenty

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60. **برجان**, it is possibly **نرمان** (Nurmān), i.e., the land of the Norse.

hours, and vice versa. Its inhabitants are Heathen and disbelievers. They fight the Slavs. In most of their affairs they are like the Franks. They are skillful in industry and in sea-ships.

## XIII

From the Book of  
Al-Tuḥfah al-Shāhiyyah

Al-Shīrāzi

(A.D. 1311)

He said: As for the islands, in the section which enters the northwestern quarter and connected with the Western Ocean there are three (islands), their largest is the Island of England<sup>61</sup> whose area is twelve squares: From 7°19' to 7°21'; and from 8°19' to 8°21'; and from 9°19' to 9°21'; and from 10°19' to 10°21'. The smallest is the Island of Ireland which has six sections: 8°22', 8°23', 20°22', 20°23', 5°22' and 5°23'. The best hunting fowl, which is known as ṣanqar<sup>62</sup>, is found there. The middle (island in size) is the Island of Orkney<sup>63</sup> and it is in eight sections: 5°28', 5°29', 6°28', 6°29', 7°28', 7°29', 8°28' and 8°29'.

61. انكليسي (Inkilīsi)

62. صنقر, probably it should be read صقر (ṣaqr) which is a small falcon.

63. اركنية (Urkanīyah).

And he said: The longest daytime, also, reaches seventeen hours where the latitude is  $54^{\circ}$  and a fraction, eighteen (hours) where the latitude is  $58^{\circ}$ , nineteen where the latitude is  $61^{\circ}$  and twenty (hours) where the latitude is  $63^{\circ}$ . And there is an island called Thule. It is said that its inhabitants dwell in baths due to the severity of its cold. It is known as being on the latitude where civilization ends. It (daytime) is twenty-one (hours) on latitude  $64^{\circ}30'$ . Ptolemy said: The inhabitants of this place are an unfamiliar Slavic nation, therefore, it is the limit.

## XIV

From the Book of  
Manahij al-Fikar  
 Al-Waṭwāt  
 (d.A.D. 1319)

He said: And the remainder of civilization, which we have said that its end is  $66^{\circ}$ , is added to this Region (meaning the Seventh Region), and is counted with it. It is inhabited by groups of people who resemble the beasts in forms and character more than they resemble human beings. It is also related that in one of the islands of the Ocean Sea, beyond Thule whose latitude approximates the zenith of the Great Inclination, there is a savage nation who dwell in wilderness.

Their heads are stuck to their shoulders and they have no necks. They inhabit old trees, using them as houses for dwelling. Their food is acorn. This island is called the island of Norway; and it is said that there are three prosperous cities in it. Their income is scarce and their livelihood is strained due to the frequent weather changes and rain. They sow and reap their crops green. Then they dry them with fire which they build close to them (the crops), because of the lack of sun-shine due to the thickness of clouds. It is said that in some islands beyond Thule there is a nation called the Qalqar who are crossbreeds between men and sea beasts. They have horns and small eyes and they (go about) naked. They eat the beasts of the sea and the plants of the earth, and they drink salt water if they cannot obtain sweet.

And he said: And in it (meaning the Ocean Sea), beyond the Great Land, is the peninsula of Denmark. Its circumference is 750 miles. There are four cities in it, and in each city there is a king. It is round and has an isthmus of land. The island of Norway has a circumference of 4,500 miles; there are three prosperous cities in it. Its income is little, and it is abundant in weather changes and rain. Its inhabitants reap their crops before they are dry, because of the scarcity of sun-shine. They put them in houses and light fire around them until they become dry. We have mentioned this island before.

## XV

From the Book of

Nukhbat al-Dahr

Al-Dimashqi

(A.D. 1256)

He said: And the frozen lake beyond the Deserts of Kipchak<sup>64</sup>, on longitude 63<sup>o</sup>, has a length of about eight days-journey and width of about three days-journey, and they may be more or less. There is a big island in it, inhabited by people of huge statures, with white bodies and hair and blue eyes. They hardly understand a word. It is called "frozen" because it freezes all over in the winter until it becomes surrounded by mountains of ice. It is so, because when its edges freeze and the air moves its water, the waves move the frozen parts and whatever comes above that ice freezes; then it accumulates little by little and layer above layer until it becomes like hills, plateaus and a wall surrounding it.

And he said: And near the frozen lake, a distance of twenty days-journey to the west, and to the north of the land of al-Kilābiyyah<sup>65</sup> there is a large island called the "Illuminated Island", and it is inhabited by a group of Slavs. At night lights are always seen in it just like the light of fire; but there is neither fire nor illuminating bodies such as the illumination of stars or the building of

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64. القبجق (al-Qabjaq).

65. الكلابية

fire. To the south of Gog Magog there is a group of people whose heads are stuck to their shoulders without apparent necks. They live on hunting and plants which they eat. They are like the savages in strength, ignorance and might. They have a salt lake of thirty by twenty parasangs \*\*\*\* They take refuge in it when they fear their enemy, and it is called the island of R(?)wā'ah<sup>66</sup> and Allāh knows better. To their east there is a large lake, where the Eastern Ocean joins, and it is called Thule. It has many islands and numerous tribes. Their inhabitants are a group of the Qarqaz<sup>67</sup>, and it is (also) said that they are different from them, and they are crossbreeds between men and some sea beasts; and that some of them have horns and small eyes, and (go about) naked; they eat the beasts of the sea and the plants of the earth and drink salt and sweet water; and Allāh knows better.

And he said: And if the investigator looks into this extension (meaning the extension which comes out of the Pitch Sea at the extreme east of China) he will find its coast extending northward to the confines of the mountain of Balharā. From there the Pitch Sea extends with its coast continuously surrounding the land of the Qarqaz in the extreme

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66. رواعة. Possibly a corruption of نرواعة (Nurwāghah), i.e., Norway.

67. Possibly the Kirghiz.

northeast. Another (extention) comes out of it there whose length is one month and a half (journey) and whose width is twenty days (journey). There are islands in it which are inhabited by groups of people, whom we have described before, such as the inhabitants of Thule and the island of R(?)fā'ah. Then it comes back and extends northward behind the mountain of Gog Magog, then it meets their mountains from the south, east and north. Another extension comes out of it north of Gog Magog and it is called after them. Then its coasts extend until it passes the mountain of Qāfūniyā where there is a sweet lake whose water alternates between salty and sweet, and it is connected to it. There its coasts enter the Region of Darkness where there is no route for people. This falls under the North Pole.

And he said: And in this sea (meaning the Sea of Okianos), beyond the land of the Slavs, there are two big islands: One of them is the island of the men Armīyānūs<sup>68</sup> and the other one is the island of the women Armīyānūs. The first one is inhabited only by men, and the other one is inhabited only by women. Every spring they meet for two months having sexual intercourse then they depart. The one who wishes to enter these two islands can hardly see them, by reason

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68. It is obviously a corruption of Amazons.

of the abundance of mist and the darkness of the sea and the magnitude of waves. These wonders which are spread over the horizons are rarely seen, and only by accident. To the west of these two islands there are two islands with tall trees and high mountains, and they are covered with trees and fruits. Their most common bird are the white sanāqir.

## XVI

From the Book of

Jāmi' al-Funūn

Al-Ḥarrāni

(A.D. 1332)

He said: The end of the Dark Sea stands at the north of Russia, then it bends westward and beyond its bend there is no reachable place. To their (the Russians') west, in the Dark Sea, there is the peninsula of Denmark<sup>69</sup>. In this peninsula there is an uncountable number of huge and great trees. Its inhabitants light fire in their houses in daytime due to the darkness and the lack of light, because the sun does not shine on them except for a few days in the year. And it is said that in this peninsula there are savage nations who live in the wilderness; their heads are stuck to their

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69. دارموشة (Dārmūshah).



shoulders and they have no necks. They cut holes in the trees and use their interior for dwelling places. Their food is the acorns. There is an animal in it (Denmark) called cheetah, and found in large numbers.

And he said: The land of Finmark is large and has many cities, villages and tribes. But misery is common among its inhabitants due to the scarcity of food and the abundance of rain and snow in the land, both in summer and winter.

## XVII

From the Book of  
Kharīdat al-'Ajā'ib

Al-Wardi

(A.D. 1419)

He said: To the west of the land of the Rūs there is the peninsula of Denmark. In this peninsula there are ever-living big trees. Some of these trees, if twenty men surround the trunk of one of them and stretch their arms around it, will not be able to circle it. Its inhabitants light fire in their houses in daytime, because the sun is far away from them, and because light is scarce. In this peninsula there a savage nation known as the wilderness (sic) whose heads are stuck to their shoulders and they are without necks. They cut the big trees and use their insides as houses to dwell in. Their food is acorns. In it the

animal which is called cheetah is found in large numbers. It is an animal of strange description, and it does not exist or live except in those places.

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Approved

Robert L. Reynolds

Robert L. Reynolds  
Professor of History

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