

Ibrahim Ibn-Ya'qub Al-Israili said: The country of the Slavs extends from the Syrian Sea to the Surrounding Sea in the North. The Northern tribes have subjugated some of [the Slavs] and have been living among them up to now? [The Slavs form] various peoples. They used to be united under the rule of a king called Makhaf he came from a tribe of them, called W. linbaba. This tribe enjoys a great respect among them. Then divergences appeared between them, their order disappeared, they separated from one another, and every tribe came under the power of its own king.

Now [the Slavs] are governed by four kings: the king of the Bulgarin; Buyaslaw, the king of F. raghah, Bawaymah, and Karakwaf Mashaqqah, the king of the North; and Naqun, who rules over the extreme West.

The country of Naquti borders in the west with Saksun<sup>9</sup> and some Marman. The prices there are low, the horses are numerous, and they are exported to other lands. The [inhabitants of this country] have powerful arms consisting of coats of mail, helmets, and swords.

From Far. gh to [lacuna] ma yalihi, u there is a distance of ten miles; [lacuna] to the bridge there is a distance of fifty miles. It is a wooden bridge; its length is of one mile. From there to the fortress of Naqun, there is a distance of about forty miles.

The fortress of Naqun is called "Gharad," which means "a big fortress." Before Ghrad there is a castle built on a lake with sweet water. In this way most of the Slavic castles are built. [The Slavs] go to meadows abundant in water and trees, trace there a circle or a square, as they like, which marks the shape and the extension of the future fortress. Then they dig a trench around this contour and put the carved earth above. Sometimes they strengthen the walls with boards or wood as the castles are built until the walls become as high as is necessary. Then, in the wall, they make a gate of any shape they like. One can get to this gate by a wooden bridge.

From the fortress Gharad to the Surrounding Sea, there is a distance of eleven miles. Troops can hardly move in Naqun's country, for it abounds in marshes, woods, and mud.

As for the country of Buyaslaw, its extension from F. raghah to Karakwa equals to three weeks of travel. On its length, it is limited by the country of the Turks. The city of F. raghah is built of stones and limestone.<sup>1</sup> It is the richest place in goods. Russians and Slavs come there from Karakwa with goods. Moslems, Jews, and Turks come there from the country of the Turks and bring goods and trade balances. Flour, tin, and various kinds of furs are exported from there. Their country is the best among the lands of the Northern peoples, and the most abundant with means of living. The quantity of wheat which is sufficient for a human being during one month is sold therefor one qinshar. With one qinshar one can buy there as well the quantity of fodder which is necessary for an animal during forty nights or for ten hens. In F. raghah, people make saddles, bridles, and round leather shields, which are all used in their country.

In Bawaymah they make light cloths shaped like a half moon and having the form of a net. They do not fit to anything. At every time their value is of ten cloths for a qinshar. They use them for purchases and transactions and possess entire jars of them. For them, they are money and the most precious thing with which one can buy wheat, flour, horses, gold, silver, and all the rest.

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<sup>1</sup> Ar-Rawd Al-Mi'tar by Al-Himyari: "Prague is a town situated in the neighbourhood of the country of the Turks [or Magyars, see the previous note]. It is built with stones and limestone on the shore of a river which flows there. It is smaller than cities but bigger than villages. There is a market there in which one can buy all the goods which are necessary for travels or sedentary life. In the upper part of Prague, there is a big fortified castle. There is a brook there, the water of which traverses the valley."

Strange as it seems, the Bohemians are dark-skinned and black-haired. A blond person can rarely be found among them.

The way from Madhin B.r.gh™ to the city of Buyaslaw is as follows. From Madhin B.r.gh to Qualiwi, there is a distance of ten miles. From there to Nub Gh.rad, two miles. Nub Gh.rad is a fortress built of stone and quick lime. It stands on the river Salawah, into which the river Budah empties itself. From Nub Gh.rad to the salt mine of the Jews, which is also situated on the shore of the river Salawah thirty miles. From there to the fortress Burjin, situated on the river Mul.dawah, [lacuna] from there to the beginning of the forest, twenty-five miles. The distance between the extremities of the forest is forty miles; the way goes between mountains and hills. From there to a wooden bridge built over mud, about two miles. From the end of the forest [lacuna], one enters the city of F.raghah.

The country of Mashaqqah is the largest one among the countries [of the Slavs]. It abounds in food, meat, honey, and agricultural produce. The taxes are collected in market weights. Those are the salary of his men in every month, and each of them has a certain amount of them to get. He has three thousand warriors wearing coats of mail; a hundred of them is worth a thousand of other warriors in the battle. He gives those men clothes, horses, arms, and everything they need. If a child is born to one of them, he orders the child to be paid a maintenance, regardless of the child's sex. When the child grows, and he is a boy, he marries him and pays the dowry to the father of the bride. If the child is a girl, he marries her and pays the dowry to her father. The dowry of the Slavs is very big, and they pay it in the same way as the Berbers do. If aman, thus, has two or three daughters, he gets rich, but if he has two sons, he becomes poor.<sup>2</sup>

In the east the country of Mashaqqah borders with the Rus, and in the north, with the Burus. The Bums live on the coast of the Surrounding Sea. They have their own language and ignore the languages of the neighbouring peoples. They are known for their bravery. If an army comes to them, one does not wait for his companion to join him but comes out and fights without addressing anybody until he dies. The Russians attack them, coming on ships from the West.

To the west of the country of the Russians stands the City of Women. They have lands and slaves. They get pregnant from their slaves and kill the children if they prove to be boys. They ride horses and make war. Ibrahim ben-Ya'qub Al-Israili said: The information about this city is true. I have received it from Hutu, the king of the Rum. To the west of that city lives a Slavic tribe called Waltabah. They live in dense marshy forests to the west and a little to the north of the country of the Mashaqqah. They have

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<sup>2</sup> treatise of Al-Qazwini: " It is a big town in the country of the Slavs. It stands on the seashore in the middle of woods through which troops cannot pass. The king, who rules over that town, is called Mashqa, and the town is named after him. The town is rich in food, honey, meat, and fish. Their king has infantrymen, for horses cannot move through their country. He collects taxes on his possessions and pays wages to his warriors every month. If necessary, he gives them horses, saddles, bridles, weapons, and everything they need. If a child is born, the king pays the maintenance, regardless of the child's sex. If the child is a boy, when he grows, the king takes the dowry from his father and gives it to the father of the bride. Their dowry is big. If a man has two or three daughters, he gets rich, but if he has two or three sons, he becomes poor. The marriage is concluded by the will of the king, and people are not free to choose partners for themselves. The king gives them all their food and provides food for the marriage party. He is like a father who cares about his children. They are very zealous, unlike the other Turks," Al-Qazwini, Zakariya Ibn-Muhammad Ibn-Mahmud el-Cazivini's Kosmographie, Zweiter Teil, Die Denkmäler der Länder, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Göttingen, 1849), 415

a big city which stands on the coast of the Surrounding Sea. The city has twelve gates and a haven for which the shore with firm ground is used. They make war on the Mashaqqah and are very powerful. They have no king and do not obey anybody but are governed by their old people.

As for the king of the Bulgars, Ibrahim Ibn-Ya'qub said: I have not entered their country, but I saw their ambassadors in Madhin B.r.gh when they came to King Hutu. They wear tight clothes and waistbands from which ingots of gold and silver hang. Their king is very powerful. He wears a crown. He has scribes, palace officers, and functionaries. He gives orders and rules, as great kings do. They know languages and translate the Gospel into Slavonic. They are Christians.

Ibrahim Ibn-Ya'qub said: the Bulgars [lacuna] embraced Christianity [lacuna] in the country of the Rum when they besieged Al-Qustantiniyyah. The emperor spoke to them in a kind and humble way and tried to gain sympathy with rich gifts. One of his steps was that he gave his daughter to the Bulgar king as a wife, and she brought him to embrace Christianity Ibrahim said: Al-Qustantiniyyah is situated to the south of the Bulgars. In the East and in the North, the Bulgars border with the Pechenegs. To the west of them is situated the Venetian Lake. It is a gulf which comes from the Syrian Sea, passes between the Great Land and Al-Qustantiniyyah washes the coasts of Rumah and Lanqubardiyah, which belong to the Great Land, and interrupts at Aqulayah. All these places form a unique island washed by the Syrian Sea in the south and by the Venetian gulf in the east and the west. Only the western side is not limited by the sea.

The Slavs live on both coasts of this gulf, beginning from the place where it comes out of the Syrian Sea in the west. To the east of them live the Bulgars, and to the west—other Slavs. The Slavs who live in the west are more powerful and courageous. The people living in that region ask them for grace and are afraid of their force. Their country consists of mountains with bumpy ways.

Generally speaking, the Slavs are very powerful, and were they not divided, no people could compete with them in force. Of all the countries, they live in the most prosperous and richest one. They are engaged in agriculture and business and excel in these all the peoples of the North. Their trade is carried on by land and by sea to the Russians and Al-Qustantiniyyah. Many Northern tribes speak the Slavic language, for they are mixed with the Slavs. Among them are the Germans, the Magyars, the Pechenegs, the Russians, and the Chazars<sup>39</sup> Hunger can result in their country, not from a drought or some dry years but from abundant diluvial rains and constant floods. The drought is not grave in their country, for it [the country] is humid and cold. They sow in two seasons of the year, at the end of the summer and in the spring, and have two harvests. Mostly they sow millet.

The cold, even when intense, is healthy for [the Slavs], and the excessive heat kills them. They do not dare go to Lanqubardiyah for it is too hot there, the heat damages them, and they die. They feel well only in the cold, but if it gets warm, they get ill and die because of it. They have two illnesses, and it is extremely rare that anyone would not have one of them: erysipelas and fistulas. They abstain from eating chickens, for this, as they say, makes them fall and provokes erysipelas. They eat the meat of cows and geese, and this food fits them.

Their clothes are loose except the cuffs which are tight.

Their kings guard their women, who are very zealous towards them. A man of them can have twenty wives and more.

Most of the trees which grow in their forests are apple trees, pear trees, and peach trees. In those forests lives a strange bird with green feathers, which can repeat sounds uttered by people and animals. It may be found in [...], and then they hunt it. The

Slavs call it "saba." There is also a hen called by the Slavs "tatra." It has tasty meat. They cry from the tops of the trees, and one can hear them from a distance of one farsakh. They are mostly of two kinds: black and motley. They are more beautiful than peacocks. [...].

The country of the Slavs is very cold. The cold is the most severe when the moon appears at night, and the days are fine. In these days the cold gets more and more severe, the land petrifies, all the drinks freeze, the water in wells becomes like stucco and then petrifies as well. If people snuff up water and then reject it, pieces of ice appear on their beards, looking like glass, and one can hardly break them until he warms himself or enters a building. When the night is dark, and the day is cloudy, the freeze and the cold get slighter. At that time ships are broken, and those who are there perish, for pieces of ice which are on their rivers, similar to mountains, hit the ships. However, a young strong man from the crew can climb on such an ice floe and stay alive.

The Slavs do not have baths. Instead, they build wooden houses, caulk all the holes with a thing which grows on their trees, looks like moss, and is called by them "m.kh." They use it also as tar for their ships. So, they build a stone hearth in one of the corners and open in its upper part a small window through which the smoke escapes. When it gets warm, they close that window and close the door of the house. They have there jars of water. They pour that water on the warm hearth, and the steam starts rising. Everyone holds in his hand a bundle of grass with which he draws the air towards himself. Their pores open, the sweat flows from their bodies, and their manges and ulcers disappear. They call this building "al-at.bba."

Their kings travel in big vans which rise on four wheels. In the corners of the vans stand four columns on which a palanquin embroidered with dibaju hangs, fixed with solid chains, so that the one who sits inside does not shake when the van shakes. This van is made for ill and wounded people.