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## Contents

Editor's Note .....	11
Russia and the East	
<i>Marsil N. Farkhsbatov</i>	
Ahmet-Zeki Validi Togan and the Travel Accounts of Ahmad ibn Fadlan .....	15
<i>Sergey O. Kurbanov</i>	
Russian Views on Koreans and Japanese Colonial Regime in Korea of the First Quarter of the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century .....	39
<i>Nikolay A. Samoylov</i>	
The Main Stages & Characteristic Features of Sino-Russian Socio-cultural Interaction in the 18 <sup>th</sup> – early 20 <sup>th</sup> Centuries .....	55
Linguistics	
<i>Vadim B. Kasevich</i>	
Phonetics and Semantics: Some Cursory Remarks .....	65
<i>Alexander Yu. Zheltov</i>	
What Do Personal Pronouns Mean, and What Means Do they Use for That: Specifics of Gban (South Eastern Mande).....	73
History and Source Studies	
<i>Nikolay A. Dobronravov</i>	
Arabic and Ajami Colophons in West African and African Diaspora Islamic Manuscripts .....	89
<i>Björn Forsén, Konstantin A. Zbukov</i>	
War and Peace: Some Rarely Used Russian and Finnish Sources for the History of Russo-Turkish Relations in the 19 <sup>th</sup> Century.....	95
<i>Vladimir L. Uspenskiy</i>	
Policy of the Mongol Yuan Dynasty towards Tibetan Lamas and the Manchu Qianlong Emperor's Attitude to It.....	111
<i>Evgeniy I. Zelenev</i>	
Army Reforms of the 1850s-1870s in Egypt.....	119

## Literature

*Anastasia A. Guryeva*

Korean Vernacular Love Poetry in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries:  
 “Male” and “Female” Poems ..... 129

*Maria P. Petrova*

Mystical Enchantment in the Works of G. Mend-Ooyo ..... 147

## Geocultural Spaces and Codes of Cultures of Asian and African Countries

*Victor V. Bocharov*

Russian Legal Culture and “Criminal State”  
 (Views from the Perspective of Legal Anthropology) ..... 155

*Yulia S. Mylnikova*

Women’s Property Rights in the Inheritance Regime  
 of Imperial China (Tang-Song Dynasties) ..... 167

*Ekaterina A. Zavidovskaya*

Deserving Divine Protection: Religious Life  
 in Contemporary Rural Shanxi and Shaanxi Provinces ..... 179

## Foreign Policy &amp; International Relations of Asian and African Countries

*Marina N. Samoylova*

The Presence of Japanese General Trading Companies in Europe:  
 History and Present ..... 197

## In Memoriam

Bicentenary of Shaikh at-Tantawi (1810-1861):  
 Professor of Oriental Studies at the University of St. Petersburg  
 (*Nikolay N. Dyakov*) ..... 205

Contributors ..... 213

## Editor's Note

This volume is launching a new periodical – *Saint-Petersburg Annual of Asian and African Studies*. The Annual is an extension of the Saint-Petersburg University Bulletin, which is a leading academic periodical widely known in Russia and beyond.

The current issue of the Annual reflects the conceptions which underlie the scholarly activities of Saint Petersburg University. The main objective is to acquaint its readership with the most recent results of research in the field of Asian and African Studies. Six divisions of the issue cover the most significant fields of study. The interdisciplinary nature of the Annual will hopefully draw the attention of scholars in linguistics, history, literature, political studies, etc.

Any comments and criticisms will be greatly appreciated and should be directed to the Editorial Board by e-mail at: [vestnik.vf@mail.ru](mailto:vestnik.vf@mail.ru).

Editor

Evgeniy I. Zelenev

# Russia and the East

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# Ahmet-Zeki Validi Togan and the Travel Accounts of Ahmad ibn Fadlan

*Marsil N. Farkhsbatov*

## *Abstract*

Ahmet-Zaki Validi went down in history both as a politician, and as a scholar. This article is an attempt not only to shed new light on his research into the famous *Travel Accounts* of the early 10<sup>th</sup> century Arab traveler, but also to reveal his contribution into the Oriental studies. Even though the Soviet Arabist Kovalevsky (1895-1969) came to be the first scholar in a sort of competition to have the Mashhad manuscript published, it was Validi who discovered the new, fuller version of the account by Ibn Fadlan, secretary of the Baghdad Caliphate envoy to the Volga Bulgharia, and who developed and put into practice methodological principles that helped to get a deeper understanding of the nature and importance of this historic and literary monument.

*Key words:* Ahmet-Zaki Validi, Ahmad ibn Fadlan.

Ahmet-Zaki Validi (Russian: Ahmet Validov; Turkish: Zeki Velidi Togan) found the manuscript of the *Travel Accounts* by Ibn Fadlan as well as the works of other Arab geographers in the mosque library in the Imam Riza shrine complex in Mashhad, centre and capital of Razavi Khorasan Province, and this find gave him invaluable data in studying the history of the Turkic peoples thus providing academic evidence to support their claims to be acknowledged as distinct ethnic identity. Moreover, having settled in Western Europe this Bashkir scholar gained practically unlimited access to the achievements of modern scientific thought.

It was not, however, within Validi's power to make the newly found manuscript of the medieval Arab writer immediately available for scholars. One reason was the time required to make a copy of the manuscript. Having no photo camera in Mashhad, Velidi spent "three days and nights on end" (Validov 1924, Validi 1998: 169) making a handwritten copy of just a part of the text by Ibn Fadlan.

Unfortunately, then the library was closed for a long period of time due to the celebration of Novruz, - he wrote later, - Having returned the manuscripts to the library, I could do nothing but ask an acquaintance of mine to make copies of both manuscripts, and I am hoping to receive them some day (Validov 1924: 237).

Contrary to his expectations he had to wait for a long time. In his letter to academician V.V.Barthold, Validi complained that the curators of Imam Riza library were still reluctant to grant him permission to copy these manuscripts.

When in 1923 I saw the book in Mashhad, the librarians didn't mind selling it to me for a trifling sum of money, but instead of buying it I draw their attention to its being a rar-

ity. Now they guard it so closely that they would not even show it to me, the scholar who pointed out its value, - stated Validi bitterly. (Archives ... F. 68. Op. 2. D. 38. L. 34)

When the copies were eventually received from Mashhad, Validi could not immediately start using them in his work. Up until the late 1920s he was actively engaged in the political life of the Russian emigrant communities in Western Europe and Turkey, as well as in teaching (he was a professor of the History of Turkic peoples at the Faculty of Letters, Istanbul University) and in archaeographic research in the rich archives of the former Ottoman Empire that had until that time been virtually unknown to European historians.

The list of papers that Validi prepared for publication during the years spent abroad is impressive. Yet, due to the political situation in Kemalist Turkey, most of them remained unpublished. Moreover, in 1932 the inexhaustible historian was forced to emigrate for the second time. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder and the first President of the Republic of Turkey, could not forget nor accept the independent thinking Validi had expressed in the discussion of the suggested concept of the history of the Turkic peoples that became officially adopted after the first Turkish History Conference in Ankara in 1932.

Validi left Istanbul for Vienna where he was finally provided with adequate conditions to carry out all the tasks he had been planning to fulfill, and first of all to write his work on the *Travel Accounts* by Ibn Fadlan which was also to become his dissertation.

On October 19, 1931, the Bashkir émigré scholar sent a letter from Vienna to his Russian colleagues informing them about this work. He wrote to academician I.Yu.Krachkovskii, an old friend of his:

I am going to spend the coming winter in Vienna to have everything prepared for defending the doctor's dissertation. My address here is as follows - Prof. Validi, Collegium Hungaricum, Museumstrasse 7, Wien VII. Please let me know if any scholar in Russia is engaged in preparing the text by Ibn Fadlan for publication. I am asking about this since I myself am working on the manuscript. At the moment I am writing the text in Russian hoping that, if I fail to publish the book in Turkish, it will at least have a chance to be printed in Russia. Still, if this work is already being done in Russia, I will write my text in Turkish or German (Archives ... F. 1026. Op. 3. D. 195. L. 8).

Validi dedicated all the years spent in Vienna to studies and research. His works published between 1932 and 1935 are mainly of academic nature<sup>1</sup>. His political preferences and views were voiced only occasionally. Even in his politically charged booklet "On Yedi Kumaltı Şeheri ve Sadri Maksudi Bey" ("Seventeen Cities Under Sand and Sadri Maksudi Bey") (İstanbul, 1934. 62 p.) Validi stressed the dangers of making science ideologized and announced his complete departure from politics for the sake of his research into the history of the Turkic peoples.

<sup>1</sup> While in Austria, Validi published some materials concerning the Mashhad manuscript by Ibn Fadlan (see, e.g.: (Validi 1934: 368). For further detail see: (Bulgakov 1996: 32-4).

Since he was determined to complete his university education with obtaining a Ph.D., from February 1934 Validi put every effort into a thorough study of Ibn Fadlan's book on the Mashhad manuscript, the work that was conceived as his dissertation. This interdisciplinary research required full concentration of his mind. Luckily, Vienna with its National and fundamental University libraries, with unparalleled collections of books at different institutions and societies, offered excellent opportunities for such research. Validi also worked in the library of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, of the National Museum of Ethnography and History with its Department of Numismatics, and those of the institutes at the University of Vienna: the Ethnology Institute, the Institute for Eastern European History, the Institute for Slavic Philology, the Geography Seminar, the Economic and Cultural History Seminar, and other institutions.

It took him a year to finish the paper of 110 printed pages and on April 24, 1935, it was presented for defense. The thesis consisted of three chapters. The introduction (pp. i-xi) contained a general description of the Mashhad manuscript and its parts – the geographical writings by Ibn al-Faqih, Abu Dulaf and Ahmad ibn Fadlan. Therewith Validi explained to which extent these writings had been used by Yaqut, Ahmad Tusi, Istakhri, Ibn Rustah and other Arab authors of later time. For example, there are multiple mentions of Yaqut “having borrowed from Ibn Fadlan mainly the miracles (*gajaiib*)” while neither Istakhri nor Gardezi nor al-Biruni quote Ibn Fadlan as their source (pp. v, vii–viii). Below is how the thesis defender comments on the fact: “Muslims of the Caliphate had contacts with Volga Muslims intensive enough for any Arab geographer to have his personal sources of information about the Bulgars (besides Ibn Fadlan)” (Validi A.-Z. 1935: vii–viii).

The introduction proves hereafter that Caliph al-Muqtadir's embassy returned not via Khazaria and the Caucasus but took the same route back as it had taken earlier from Baghdad to the Volga Bulgharia<sup>2</sup>. According to Validi, this is why some pieces of Ibn Fadlan's information about the Khazars could have been only based on other people's evidence rather than not witnessed by Ibn Fadlan himself as it was stated by authors like Yaqut (p. v)<sup>3</sup>. In spite of this, Validi gives credit to Ibn Fadlan for the reliability and significance of his records.

<sup>2</sup> Later A.P. Kovalevskii came to the same conclusion, see: (Kovalevskii 1939), his opinion became indisputable in Soviet Orientalistics. In the early 1960s it was only B.N. Zakhoder who suggested that Ibn Fadlan's way back home was by water, i.e. along the Volga and across the Caspian Sea, rather than by land following the caravan routes, see: (Zakhoder 1962: 57–8; Zakhoder 1967: 183–4).

<sup>3</sup> Here A.Z. Validi argues with V.V. Barthold who held an opinion that according to Yaqut Ibn Fadlan had visited the state of the Khazars as well, see: (Enzyklopädie ... 1927: 1005). Of note is the fact that the Mashhad manuscript itself does not give sufficient evidence to state whether or not Ibn Fadlan visited Khazaria, as it comes to an abrupt end right at the beginning of the story about the Khazars. Validi's opinion as well as that of other scholars is based on cross-references (indirect sources).

Validi also does full justice to Ibn Fadlan's intelligence and wit, admiring his power of observation and precision in describing the customs and traditions of foreign peoples with due and careful attention to the minutest details – the qualities that “many a contemporary traveler to the Kyrgyz Steppes could envy” (p. x).

Validi ends the thesis introduction by expressing his joy about the fact that it was in 1923, precisely a thousand years after the *Travel Accounts* had been compiled and exactly a hundred years after the classic study of them by C.M. Frähn had been published, that he had the luck to discover a more complete version of Ibn Fadlan's records helping thus to reveal their full significance and to absolve the 10<sup>th</sup> century Arab traveler of the wrongful suspicions in his lacking of expertise that some medieval and modern scholars had cast on him.

The first chapter of the thesis (pp. 1-44) provides the Arabic text of the first part of Ibn Fadlan's book in Validi's conjecture along with his translation of the text into German. The Mashhad manuscript folios under analysis (i.e. folios 196b to 203b) that make up about a half of the available text by Ibn Fadlan offer an account of events starting from the beginning of the caliph's embassy's journey up to the time spent by Ibn Fadlan in the Bashkir lands. The size of the thesis, the time limitations, and the difficulties in deciphering the handwriting of the manuscript's copyist, who apparently had not have enough proficiency in the Arabic language, were the obstacles that prevented Validi from studying all available parts of the *Travel Accounts*. He therefore had to confine his research to the study of the first part of the Arab traveler's journey to the distant Volga Bulgharia of which the recently found manuscript provided a lot of valuable information previously unknown.

The Arabic text in the thesis is neatly copied in Validi's own hand. Nearly every page of it is replete with notes that include various possible readings of certain words or phrases whose meaning could not be determined with full accuracy due to the copyist's mistakes, damage to the manuscript or unintentional corruptions in Ibn Fadlan's reproduction of some Turkic geographic names, titles, etc. Whenever possible, Validi compares his own conjectures with those made by other scholars (C.M.J. Frähn, A.Ya. Harkavy, J.A.B. Dorn, J. Marquart and others).

Validi also did the job of cross-checking the Mashhad manuscript and other remaining parts of the *Travel Accounts*, first of all those included into the various versions of Yaqut's *Geographical Dictionary*. In doing so Validi was using the multi-volume publication by H.F. Wüstenfeld supplemented with some unprinted versions of this popular work by the 13<sup>th</sup> century Arab geographer from internationally renowned archives at the centres for Oriental studies around the world. While transcribing the text, Validi also made numerous references to the writings by Zakariya al-Qazwini and Ahmad Tusi (pp. 11, 39, 48).

The Arabic text supplied by Validi with a total of over 120 notes not only proves his high expertise in Arabic philology but also clearly demonstrates the importance of introducing the Mashhad version of Ibn Fadlan's records for aca-

demic use. Yet not all the obscurities in the Arabic text of the *Travel Accounts* underwent definitive clarification in the thesis, which fact is mentioned by the author who was very well aware that this work was but a first step in the study of the Mashhad manuscript.

Besides the Arabic text itself, Validi provided its translation into German. The official thesis readers (reviewers) noted that it was “diligently made” and “mostly... very good” (Archiv der Universität Wien). Although this translation cost Validi a lot of time and effort, he was quite satisfied with the result. He realized that translating into a European language the priceless content of the early 10<sup>th</sup> century Arab writer’s accounts was the only way to make it available for Orientalists around the globe and this should have been done in the shortest time possible.

The German text is rich in footnotes too (in some cases, there are up to 24 notes per page, as we can see, for example, on page 40), that not infrequently turn out to be thorough and detailed excursions into history, ethnography, geography and philology, sometimes even qualifying as comprehensive articles. They comprise a separate thesis chapter of 55 pages. When working on the notes, Validi not only used a multi-language bibliography of every book on the subject that he had access to, but also relied on his observations made during the years he had spent following the route of the Arab embassy in order to draw necessary ethnographic parallels to what is mentioned by Ibn Fadlan in his records. Quite often Validi made use of the data from the writings by many Oriental authors (Ibn A’tham al-Kufi, Ali ibn al-Athir, Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Hawqal, al-Biruni, al-Tabari and others), some of other original manuscripts having first been discovered by Validi in various archives in Austria, Germany and Turkey.

Many of those “excursion-notes” are texts exploratory in nature that present new approaches to the issues discussed. Such is a comment to the ethnonym of *saqaliba*. Here Validi takes ten pages (p. 1-10) to prove that what Ibn Fadlan denotes as *saqaliba* refers to all Volga Bulgars and the peoples of North-Eastern Europe feudatory to them. Arab authors would generally use the term for the Slavic peoples as well as Finno-Ugric and Scandinavian tribes – that is, all fair-skinned northern (in relation to Arabia) ethnoses. However, Validi’s thesis shows that even before Ibn Fadlan some Arab writers referred to the Bulgars as *saqaliba* (pp. 6-7).

According to Validi, the Abbasid rulers (and following them - the author of the *Travel Accounts*) called the king of the Volga Bulgars *the king of the Siqlabi* in order to give more weight to their own diplomatic mission. Validi states that “Ibn Fadlan’s embassy was officially sent to the king of a large Northern Islamic country (*Siqlabi*) rather than to some unknown Bulgars” and this country was considered as a plausible ally of the Baghdad caliph in his struggle against Byzantium and the Khazars (pp. 8-9). On the other hand, the title of *the king of North-East Europe* ascribed to the ruler of the Volga Bulgaria could have concurred with his inner-

most desire to seem and be powerful, as his state “was becoming increasingly influential in the development of trade relations between North-West Europe and the countries of the Caliphate” (pp. 8-9)<sup>4</sup>.

Validi’s having a strong sense of Turkic national identity is also reflected in his commentary to the title *yiltavar* which bore the father of the Bulghar khan who received the Caliphal diplomatic mission (pp. 10-13). Validi rejects C.M.J. Frähn’s reading of the term as *Vladimir* or *Vlatavaz* from Yaqut’s corrupted form of “*b.l.t.v.a.r*” since he considers it as artificially constructed within the framework of the “Slavic theory” suggested by this Russian scholar (p. 12). For the thesis defender, the title of *yiltavar* should, first and foremost, be identified with *elteber*, the common Turkic title for a ruler which was widespread in the ancient Turkic world among, for example, the Uyghurs, the Kyrgyz and the Huns. He writes: “The title of *elteber* came to the Bulgars from the state system of the Göktürks (Celestial Turks) (Blue Turks) or even the Huns” (p. 11)<sup>5</sup>.

Some of Validi’s comments echo his arguments about Central Asia desertification as the principal reason for the migration of the Turks to other regions, including Anatolia, voiced by him at the first Turkish History Conference in Ankara in 1932. For example, by comparing Ibn Fadlan’s and Yaqut’s information about the weight and price of a cartload of firewood in the 10<sup>th</sup> and in the 13<sup>th</sup> century in Khwarezm, Validi concludes that due to the considerable growth in population during that period the area was disastrously deforested. On page 28 Validi declares with certainty that the barchan sand dunes advancing in Turkistan had been caused primarily by such deforestation and not by drought as it was claimed by Atatürk and by the majority of the Turkish Historical Society (*Türk Tarih Kurumu*). On the same page he mentions that the issue was placed in the clearest light in an unprinted article of his titled “Overpopulation as a Factor in Internal and External Migration in the medieval Central Asia” (p. 11).

All in all, according to both opponents, the Arabist Theodor Seif and the Iranist Bernhard Geiger, Validi’s thesis was a “major scientific achievement” in the study of Ibn Fadlan’s famous work (Archiv der Universität Wien). By applying an

<sup>4</sup> The view that Almush, the king of the Volga Bulgharia, called himself *the king of the Saqaliba* (malik as-Saqaliba), was accepted by many scholars, see, e.g.: (Mishin 2002: 33).

<sup>5</sup> As early as in 1903 a well-known German scholar J. Marquart wrote that the title *elteber* had been applied to Turkic vassal rulers, see: (Marquart 1903: 114–5). Later the opinion was expressed in Validi’s book about Ibn Fadlan, see: (Validi 1939: 105–6). V.V. Barthold also traced the title *eltabar* back to ancient Turkic states, see: (Barthold 1963: 481–2). A.P. Kovalevskii agreed with the late Turkic origin of the title (in his version - «*йылтывар*»). See: (Kovalevskii 1954: 16, 35–6; Kovalevskii 1956: 121). The fact that Validi identified the title in the name of the Bulgharia king with the ancient Turkic title *elteber* in the mid-1930s remained unknown to a great number of Soviet scholars, see, e.g.: (Smirnova 1981: 249). When describing the way the title was used by the ancient Turks references are made to: (Klyashtornyi 1964: 126). Great contribution to the study of the etymology of *elteber* and its significance in the ancient Turkic administrative bodies was made by M.I. Artamonov, S.G. Klyashtornyi, A.P. Novoseltsev and P.B. Golden, see, e.g.: (Artamonov 2001: 257–67; Klyashtornyi 2003: 315; Novoseltsev 1990: 147, 170, 175; Golden 1980: 147–150).

interdisciplinary approach and drawing on Arabic philology, ethnology, numismatics, historical geography, history, etc., Validi stood out as a true disciple of V.V.Barthold who had laid down the foundation for the interdisciplinary study of the ancient past of the Turkic and other peoples and had enriched Oriental studies with many valuable observations and conclusions.

On May 9, 1935, the thesis was defended and the same year on June 7 Validi was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (in the Russian academic system: *kandidat nauk*, literally a "candidate of sciences"; in Validi's case: "candidate of historical science") by the University of Vienna. Hardly had two days passed when the newly qualified Doctor was employed in the position of a visiting lecturer to teach Arabic and Turkish at the Oriental Seminar, University of Bonn. His teaching load was not too heavy<sup>6</sup> to leave him without time for research. So, the scholar focused primarily on finalizing his work on Ibn Fadlan's *Travel Accounts*. The part of the *Accounts* that was not included into the thesis, namely folios 203b to 212b of the Mashhad manuscript relating to the embassy's stay in the Volga Bulgharia, was yet to be transcribed and translated. The translation was then to be supplied with a commentary and given a comprehensive interpretation.

Because of what had previously been done in Vienna and thanks to Professor P. Kahle who provided a favourable scientific atmosphere among the Orientalists at the University of Bonn, Validi's research progressed at a fairly fast pace. In a season's greetings card to academician I.Yu. Krachkovskii in late December 1935 he wrote: "*Ibn Fadlan* is prepared for print and will hopefully be published in Hungary" (Archives ... F. 1026. Op. 3. D. 195. L. 18)<sup>7</sup>. However, the publishing took much longer than had been expected. In a little more than a year, on January 3, 1937, the same addressee in Leningrad received another greeting card with the following postscript: "I do hope that my *Ibn Fadlan* will go to print in February" (Archives ... F. 1026. Op. 3. D. 195. L. 19). In the letter dated September 4, 1937, the scholar conveyed: "My *Ibn Fadlan* is ready. It will probably appear in Holland as Volume 9 of *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*" (Archives ... F. 1026. Op. 3. D. 195. L. 20).

For reasons yet unknown to us, that was not to happen either, although the E.J.W. Gibb Memorial<sup>8</sup> were hoping to publish excerpts from the Mashhad manuscript (first of all, the writings by Ibn Fadlan and by Ibn al-Faqih) and believed it was important to keep up the readers and scholarly organizations' interest in "*Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*" (Archiv der Universität Bonn. Bd. 13). The issue remained unsettled until Professor Kahle came to the rescue.

<sup>6</sup> See: (Farhshatov 1998: 54).

<sup>7</sup> As it can be seen from the letter of P. Kahle of October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1937, to J. H. Kramers, the suggestion to publish the *Travel Accounts* by Ibn Fadlan in the publishing house of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was made by Prof. D. Nemeth, a turkologist and an old friend of A.Z. Validi, see: (Archiv der Universität Bonn Bd 13).

<sup>8</sup> For example, this series published a research of an anonymous work in Persian made by a Russian émigré Orientalist V. Minorsky "The Regions of the World" (Minorsky 1937).

He suggested that Validi should publish his work in the “Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes” (“Treatises on Oriental studies”) of the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft (the German Oriental Society). Being the Society’s chairman, he took the dealing with organizational aspects upon himself.

But in the autumn of 1938 Professor Kahle found himself in a difficult position. He was forced to retire after his wife Maria and son Wilhelm helped a shop-owner to fix his place up after it was ransacked during the Kristallnacht (November 9-10, 1938). Still his collaboration with Validi on preparing *Ibn Fadlan* for print continued. On November 19, 1938, Validi, who had transferred to the University of Göttingen, wrote to Kahle in Bonn: “Since yesterday I have been reading and correcting the proof sheets of the Arabic text, which I am going to send you in two days” (Archiv der Universität Bonn. Bd. 7). Two weeks later he wrote that he would soon send printed sheets of the German version which he had checked “once again, by using the photocopies [of the Mashhad manuscript kept in Berlin]” (Archiv der Universität Bonn. Bd. 7). The letter dated December 21 informed that the German translation was sent enclosed, while the commentary after being checked by Bertold Spuler (1911–1990) would shortly be ready for printing too (Archiv der Universität Bonn. Bd. 7).

Meanwhile, Kahle’s position in Bonn was deteriorating and his plans were at risk of failure. Having returned from Christmas vacation, the worried Validi wrote to him on January 17, 1939: “I have been back in Göttingen for a week now. I believed that [upon returning home] I would find a fair number of proof sheets on my desk. But nothing has arrived so far” (Archiv der Universität Bonn. Bd. 7). In his next letter, dated February 9, he conveyed that the rest of the book would be ready for print and sent to Bonn in two weeks. At the same time Validi expressed his deep dismay at the misfortunes of his colleague and friend who had fallen into disfavour with the authorities (Archiv der Universität Bonn. Bd. 7). Kahle was so depressed that he didn’t write a reply until as late as February 17. He informed Validi that the issue of publishing Ibn Fadlan’s *Travel Accounts* had been settled conclusively and that the book would be printed as Volume 24 of the “Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes” (Treatises on Oriental studies) (Archiv der Universität Bonn. Bd. 7).

In April 1939 last corrections to the proof sheets of the *Travel Accounts* were made. Yet Validi was not to see the final proof sheets. On September 1, 1939, the day World War II broke out, he left Germany to return to work at the University of Istanbul.

There the Bashkir émigré scholar found himself drawn into political games. As a result, he was accused of “Pan-Turanism” and “pro-German activity” and in May 1944 he was jailed for 17 months.

Moving to Turkey made it impossible for Validi to correct typographical errors in the book and equally so complete the subject and name indices and the bibliography and sources. On September 18, 1939 three additional paragraphs to “The

Introduction” were sent from Istanbul to Leipzig where the book was being printed. They reveal that by that time Validi had already seen the work of A.P.Kovalevsky (Leningrad) which was entitled “Voyage of Ibn Fadlan to the Volga” (M.; L., 1939. 193, 33 p.). We can only make guesses about the feelings of the discoverer of Ibn Fadlan’s *Accounts* who lost - at least nominally - the right to be considered the first to study and publish them.

The printing of Validi’s research came to an end in the late autumn of 1939. The book turned out to be a very serious volume covering 416 pages (Validi 1939). It was three times as large as his thesis and included the entire text by Ibn Fadlan preserved in the Mashhad manuscript (pp. 1-45, paginated separately), its translation into German (pp. 1-104) and the Commentary called “*excursions*” (pp. 104-295). The book began with a long and detailed *Introduction* (pp. i-xxxiv), which nonetheless lacked such information important for publication of manuscripts as the historiography of the subject, the archeographic and paleographic description of the Mashhad manuscript<sup>9</sup> and the evaluation of the sources. The *Commentary* had an *addendum* in the form of an article on “*Saqaliba*” (pp. 295-331). The book ended with the list of abbreviations (pp. 332-336) and the list of amendments (p. 337).

The *Introduction* coincides in many points with that to his thesis, with several new elements added. For example, the author focuses his attention on finding out who of the later Arab writers made use of the *Travel Accounts* by Ibn Fadlan, as, according to Yaqut, the book was widespread and well-known in the Islamic world. On the basis of scrupulous studies of the text, he comes to a conclusion that besides Yaqut and A. Tusi (the late 12th century) at least two other authors - Amin Razi (the late 16th century) and Zakariya al-Qazwini referred to the manuscript. In Validi’s opinion, both Razi and Tusi had at hand another copy of Ibn Fadlan’s manuscript, a fuller version than the one available to Yaqut or the one kept in Mashhad (pp. xii-xiii)<sup>10</sup>.

Further we find a detailed description of the structure, importance and role of the Caliphal diplomatic mission to Volga Bulgharia in the context of “history of Islam” (p. xx). One of the underlying reasons for this enterprise, writes the author, was the ambition of the Baghdad caliph to win Turkish support in his vitally important struggle against both the internal opposition and external threats (pp. xx-xxiv). Validi considers this policy to have brought positive results: shortly afterwards the internal and external enemies of the Abbasids (Iranian nationalists, fol-

<sup>9</sup> Giving a description of the Mashhad manuscript, A.Z. Validi only noted his paper published in the Soviet Russia in 1924.

<sup>10</sup> See also: (Validi 1939: 33, 125-126). Relying on the fact that there were different copies of Ibn Fadlan’s work, H. Gregoire, one of the French reviewers of Validi’s book under consideration suspected the authenticity of the Mashhad manuscript shedding his doubts about its being an antique manuscript written by a Medieval Arab traveler, see: (Validi 1944/1945: 411). However, the majority of scholars consider this overcritical statement as groundless and unjustified.

lowers of Mazdaism and supporting them Karmats were crushed everywhere, while the neighbouring Turks converted to Islam, thus ushering the final disappearance of Judaism in the state of the Khazars (pp. xxv-xxvii). Altogether, the diplomatic mission to the Volga is characterized as one of "the most significant diplomatic and cultural undertakings of the Abbasid Empire" (p. xxvii)<sup>11</sup>.

A.Z. Validi characterizes the book by Ibn Fadlan as an invaluable source in studying interethnic and intercultural relations in the vast Aral-Caspian region, taking into account the fact that the period between the Scythian domination (B.C.E.) and the Mongol rule (since the beginning of the 13th century) is extremely poorly documented. He writes that "would-be scholars and researchers" will use Ibn Fadlan's manuscript for this purpose in the first place (p. xxvii).

The author confines himself with some tentative remarks, which are, however, of importance and deserve serious attention. For example, speaking about a great similarity between the Scythians, on the one hand, and the Turks and Mongols, on the other, in terms of customs, traditions, principles of state organization, system of beliefs, ethnic character and anthropological features<sup>12</sup>, he seems inclined to support the suggestion of a famous specialist in Iranian and Chinese studies, B. Laufer, to revise the theory according to which the Scythians were of Iranian origin (p. xxvii-xxix). Moreover, Validi considers the opinion - quite widespread in specialist literature - that the Turkic peoples came to East Europe "from Mongolia and Altay not earlier than in the times of the Hunns" as absolutely erroneous.

<sup>11</sup> Validi's assertion that the diplomatic mission of the Baghdad caliph to the Volga Bulgaria had been a great diplomatic success triggered heated debates. A. Gregoire, for instance, supported this view of the Bashkir scholar writing in his review of the book that "Ibn Fadlan succeeded as a diplomat. He had the right to take pride in his mission. In hard times of the Caliphate he managed to turn the Turkic people towards Islam, whose prospective role he might have foreseen. This development, without any doubt, predetermined the defeat of the Khazars. Even their belated choice of Judaism failed to give them any protection against joint attacks of their neighbours, the Russians, and their vassals, the Turks. The latter, unlike the Khazars, tried and found protection in the face of the Prince of True Believers (the Prince of True Believers is the official title of Caliph - *M.F.*)" (Validi 1944/1945: 410-413). On the contrary, K. Czeglédý and A.P. Kovalevskii, and now A.P. Novose'tsev refute completely any serious importance of Ibn Fadlan's diplomatic mission. See: (Czeglédý 1952: 232-4; Kovalevskii 1939: 123; Novose'tsev 1990: 12). The Hungarian Orientalist *a propos* notes: "In any case, the mission had greater achievements in religious rather than in political respect. As a consequence, there is no mention of him in the historical literature (Ta'rikh literature). The *Travel Accounts*, hence, survived not as a political document, but as a piece of fiction, kind of favourite book of wonders (*kitab al-ajaib*). Centuries later, Arabs kept telling stories about islamization of the far-country of the Bulgars and even made journeys there. Nevertheless, several decades after Ibn Fadlan's travels the Caliphate could neither prevent a military raid or assault of the Russians against the Bulgars, nor exercise any substantial influence on the fate of the Volga Bulgaria" (Czeglédý 1952: 234).

<sup>12</sup> Before Validi, M.I. Rostovtsev and A.I. Sobolevskii also pointed to the similarity between the Scythian and Turkic funeral rituals described by Ibn Fadlan, see: (Rostovtsev 1925; Sobolevskii 1929: 226).

ous. He draws the reader's attention to the Turkic epics that tell about their expeditions to East Europe, the Caucasus and West Asia "in legendary times" (p. xxxi)<sup>13</sup>.

The author rounds off his *Introduction* with the remark that as a scholar specializing in Altaic studies<sup>14</sup> he first planned to give no more than a translation of Ibn Fadlan's work about the Rus leaving the right to comment on this ethnicity to experts, but in the course of work he could not but focus on the people too. He specifically stresses that he uses the term *the Rus* to identify *the Swedish Rus* before the 10th century and not the Russians of later periods (p. xxxii, Note 1). Validi's opinion is that the traditions of *the Norman Rus* were in fact deeply similar to those of the Altaic ethnicities and the contacts of the Normans with the Turks had begun long before the 9th-10th centuries (p. xxxiii).

The ideas mentioned and given in the *Introduction* were further developed and supplied with detailed arguments in the main body of the book – in the form of footnotes and commentaries to the German version of *The Travel Accounts*. As it was in his thesis, the latter more often than not grew into separate research-articles abounding in new factual information and distinguished by an unexpected original approach to the problems discussed. Such are, for example, the footnotes and supplementary articles on "The Types of Turkic Yurts" (pp. 118–122), "The Shagreen Leather" (pp. 122–24), "Duumvirate – Doppeltkönigtum" of the Khazars and the North-East Turkic peoples (pp. 271–95), "Saqliba" (pp. 1, 295–331) etc.

The core of the book is the conjecture of the Arabic text (45 p.) and its translation into German. By thoroughly comparing the Mashhad manuscript<sup>15</sup> with the works by Yaqut, A.Tusi, Z.Qazwini and A.Razi, Validi comes to a substantially new, fuller description of the Baghdad caliph's diplomatic mission to the Volga. New readings of the words and phrases given in numerous footnotes as well as quotations from different authors make it possible to follow the way his research took. Contrasting Yaqut's text with that of the Mashhad manuscript clearly dem-

<sup>13</sup> Accurate determination of the period of time when the Turkic elements became recognizable behind the Urals and further still remains open for discussion. A well-known Soviet historian even wrote that "the attempts of some authors to find the Turks in East Europe and Transcaucasia in ancient times are nothing but a scientific anecdote" (Novosel'tsev 1990: 93). It was also he who stated that "ethnically and socially the Khazars state originated on the amalgamation of native (mostly Iranian) and alien Turkic-Ugric elements" (Novosel'tsev 1990: 92).

<sup>14</sup> Traditionally *a scholar specializing in Altaic studies* is usually understood as a historical linguist engaged in comparative studies of Mongolian, Turkic and Manchu-Tungus languages together.

<sup>15</sup> G. Ritter, an eminent German Arabist, reports that while working on the conjecture of Ibn Fadlan's text in Germany, Validi had at his disposal a photocopy of the Mashhad manuscript made by Ernst Herzfeld (Ritter 1942: 98). It can be seen from the above-mentioned letters of P. Kahle to I.Yu. Krachkovskii that in the mid-1930s the photocopy from the German National Library (Deutsche Nationalbibliothek) was sent to the University of Bonn for temporary use.

onstrates that regardless of being very close in contents, they both are two different versions of Ibn Fadlan's work. Containing both supporting and supplementing information, the texts give a researcher a chance to have a more accurate idea of the original *Travel Accounts*.

The Arabic text in Validi's book proves the importance of the Mashhad finding for science. The quotations from Ibn Fadlan known then through Yaqut's work accounted for less than a half of the text in the Mashhad manuscript. The original text of the *Travel Accounts* was fuller and more substantial, which is reflected on pages 3-6, 8-18, 20,-22-4, 26, 29-30, 33-5 of the Bashkir scholar's book. It is these pages that give us a chance not only to appreciate Ibn Fadlan's literary style, but also to reconstruct the circumstances in which the diplomatic mission of Caliph al-Muqtadir was sent to the "north"- to the king of the Bulgars, the date of the departure of the diplomatic caravan from Baghdad [which was on the 11<sup>th</sup> of Safar 309 AH (June 21<sup>st</sup> 921 AD)<sup>16</sup>], its route from Baghdad via Bukhara and the countries of pagans – the Oghuz Turks, the Pechenegs and the Bashkirs, and finally to the Volga, the hardships and adventures of the Arab travelers in the country of "infidels" and other important pages of the history of this serious international campaign as well as the ethnicities and states the caliph envoys were to come into contact with.

The Mashhad copy of Ibn Fadlan's work is known to be incomplete. It ends abruptly when the author only begins to describe the ceremonies at the court of the Khazar kaghan. Luckily, this part of the story was not irrecoverably lost, it survived in another version and can be found in the *Geographic Dictionary* of Yaqut, thus making it possible for Validi to reconstruct and continue the Mashhad manuscript. The Arabic text published by Validi (from line 16 page 43 to line 17 page 45) is borrowed from Yaqut's work, with this fact explicitly stated by him in the book (p. XIII and p. 43 of the Arabic next, Note 1).

Undeniably, the reconstruction based on one source only, namely on Yaqut's text, risked being inaccurate<sup>17</sup>. Yet, there was no other way for Validi. The question whether or not his reliance on one source, Yaqut's work, was scientifically valid will get a definite answer only after the full text by Ibn Fadlan is found<sup>18</sup>.

The Arabic text in Validi's version was highly acclaimed by specialists. For instance, B.Spuler praised the author for "his being remarkably conscientious" as well as for introducing "a great number of clever improvements" while compiling

<sup>16</sup> Validi gives an erroneous date – April 2<sup>nd</sup> 921. See: (Validi 1939: 5).

<sup>17</sup> Although A.P. Kovalevskii, who also studied the Mashhad manuscript, expressed his doubts that the information about the Khazars ascribed by Yaqut to Ibn Fadlan had actually been collected by the latter, he anyway left this piece of the text in his publication of 1956. See: (Kovalevskii 1939: 20; Kovalevskii 1956: 148). On the contrary, an Arabic scholar, S. ad-Dahhan decided against including the piece into his publication of Ibn Fadlan's manuscript because of its deviation in style from the rest of the text, see: (Ibn Fadlan 1959: 172).

<sup>18</sup> See, e.g.: (Validi 1944/1945: 411).

the conjecture of the “difficult” text (Spuler 1940: 201)<sup>19</sup>. To sum up, it was the conjecture of the Bashkir scholar that made the *Travel Accounts* by Ibn Fadlan in its fullest version available to Western scholars<sup>20</sup>. It is no coincidence, then, that it is still widely used by orientalists all over the world.

On the other hand, this does not mean that Validi’s understanding of Ibn Fadlan’s work is perfect or flawless, nor is it invariably accepted by all specialists in this field. The quality of the Mashhad manuscript, with some parts severely damaged and its concluding part missing, coupled with the specific hand of the copyist who seemed to have mechanically imitated most of the original without understanding it and therefore often “losing” diacritics, leaves too many questions unanswered. Unavailability of other copies of the manuscript only adds to the difficulty of making a reliable conjecture of the text. Other conjectures of Ibn Fadlan’s text, made by various researchers, clearly demonstrate that due to the unique character of the Arabic script there can be many different readings and interpretations of the *Travel Accounts* as is the case with any original Arabic text<sup>21</sup>. But Validi did not give up in the face of such objective difficulties, his determination did not fizzle out, and the result of his scholarly endeavour brought him so much recognition of his colleagues that his *Ibn Fadlan’s Reisebericht* was reprinted in Liechtenstein in 1966 and later in Frankfurt-am-Main in 1994.

Compared to the thesis, the German translation seems to have been significantly improved, especially in what concerns the literary style. This obviously can be attributed to P.Kahle who was a highly experienced editor. However, as H. von Mžik (Mžik 1942: 126.), an Austrian historian-orientalist, mentions, some awkward expressions or stylistic faults remained in this version too. Probably this can be explained by the fact that the disfavoured P.Kahle didn’t manage to edit the book with maximum performance. Anyway, in his review of the book, B.Spuler pointed to “accuracy and readability” of Validi’s translation, which in his opinion made Ibn Fadlan’s work comprehensible not only to Orientalists (Spuler 1940: 201) but to a wider circle of readers too..

According to his many reviewers, Validi’s knowledge of oriental literature “was truly amazing” (Ritter 1942: 102; Dunlop 1949: 312). While translating and commenting Ibn Fadlan’s text, Validi used a great number of different sources including dozens of Arabic, Persian, Turkic, Byzantium, Chinese authors. He quotes the

<sup>19</sup> See also: (Ritter: 1942: 105).

<sup>20</sup> It was shortly followed by translations of Ibn Fadlan’s text into other languages. For example, in 1954 Doğan translated The *Travel Accounts* into Turkish having used Validi’s monography as the source, see: (Doğan 1954).

<sup>21</sup> See, e.g.: (Kovalevskii 1939; Ritter 1942: 105-26; Blake, Frye 1949: 98-126; Cze-glédý 1952: 219-20, 222-5, 232-42. The fact noted by H. Ritter right after Validi’s book had been published that “there were no available materials to help reconstruct the original text of Ibn Fadlan’s manuscript” is still in force, see: (Ritter 1942: 104). There are no recent monographic researches on Ibn Fadlan nor are the works by K.M. Frähn, A.Z. Validi, A.P. Kovalevskii reprinted. The most recent publication known to us was published in the USA in 2005, see: (Frye 2005).

Q'uran (p. 11, 99), poetry of J.Rumi (p. 17), works of Biruni which he himself discovered<sup>22</sup>, gives his own observations made in Turkestan (p. 19), refers to Turkic ornate folk tales (dastans), etc. Besides, there are many references to unpublished works of Validi himself (p. 12). His giving large extracts from A.Tusi (pp. 125-126) and A.Razi (p. 98), though sometimes without letting the reader know where a particular manuscript was kept, made it possible for other scholars to get acquainted with these invaluable sources. Validi also focused his attention on the works by Sallam al-Tarjiman, which helped the "rehabilitation" of the latter, proving that al-Tarjiman, an envoy of Caliph al-Vasik (842-847), did actually visit the "north countries" via the Caucasus and Khazaria to China half a century prior to Ibn Fadlan<sup>23</sup>.

The specialist literature used in Validi's book reveals the author's erudition. He thoroughly studied all the works about Ibn Fadlan's journey to the Volga available at that time. He invariably took into consideration the researches by C.M.Frähn, V.G.Tiesenhausen, A.Harkavy, J.Marquart while working on the conjecture of the "*Travel Accounts*" (pp. 54, 60, 83, 86, 87, 99). At the same time his interpretation of the Arabic text demonstrates his deep knowledge of accomplishments achieved in the humanities all over the world – in Russia, Germany, France, Britain, Hungary, Finland, the Czech Republic, Scandinavia. One of his reviewers wrote that Validi's amazing knowledge and erudition made his book a true encyclopedia of Ibn Fadlan's "*Travel Accounts*" (Ritter 1942: 102).

A.Z.Validi was not a narrowly focused specialist limiting his interest only to Arabic philology. As a follower of V.V.Barthold's school, he saw ancient Arabic texts not only as literary monuments, but also as historical sources helping to use all possible evidence and data in reconstructing the lifestyle of long-gone epochs. Following this principle, he used the *Travel Accounts* by Ibn Fadlan to clarify the history of the ancient Turks in its connection with the history of neighbouring nations – the Mongols, the Khazars, the Norman Rus, the Slavs, the Finno-Ugric peoples and other nations. Therefore, the book by the Bashkir émigré scholar agrees in its structure and scientific approach with the works of other St. Petersburg Orientalists. Like C.M.Frähn, V.R.Rozen, V.V.Barthold, V.F.Minorsky and others, Validi did not confine himself to only translating and making the conjecture of the Mashhad manuscript, he also gave two large historical and ethnographic commentaries to fully show the distinctive ethnic identity of the Turks. As a result his book grew into a deep study of their customs, traditions, beliefs,

<sup>22</sup> The data drawn from Biruni by Validi were later used by other scholars, see, e.g.: (Artamonov 2001: 554, 609). One of his greatest contributions into science was introducing new sources in Oriental languages for scientific use. For example, a unique treatise by al-Kindi, a renowned 9th century philosopher from Baghdad, devoted to swords of different nations became known to researchers only thanks to Validi's book "Die Schwerter der Germanen nach arabischen Berichten des 9.-11. Jahrhunderts" (Validi 1936b). See, e.g.: (Kirpichnikov, Dubov, Lebedev 1986: 253, 397).

<sup>23</sup> For further details see: (Krachkovskii: 137-41).

everyday life, crafts, thus giving a panoramic view of the history of the Oghuz, Bashkirs and Voga Bulgars. So numerous are the new facts in Validi's book that, in B. Spuler's opinion, "it truly is a historical encyclopedia on the Turks" (Spuler 1940: 202). The idea of the historical affinity of these peoples becomes evident in the factual material which Validi drew from a wide range of oriental manuscripts speaking about historical unity of the Turks. The strongest proof of this ethnic affinity is an undeniable similarity with the traditions of the Oghuz, Bashkirs, Bulgars, Tatars, Kyrgyz, Kazakhs and other Turkic peoples, traditions that have survived through many centuries (p. 15)<sup>24</sup>. The understanding of a close connection between the ancient Turkic world and that of the ancient Mongols penetrates the pages of the book. The author even uses such terms as 'Turkic-Mongol peoples' (pp. 130, 132), "ancient Turkic-Mongolian language" (p. 225). No other Muslim author compares to Ibn Fadlan who gives so much information "showing the affinity of cultures and traditions of the ancient Turks and ancient Mongols (p. 153). Numerous examples illustrate the historical parallelism between the cultures of the Turks and Mongols<sup>25</sup>.

Comparison of Ibn Fadlan's account with other sources lets Validi describe the system of beliefs of the Turks. He stresses that for centuries their outlook was basically of paganistic nature (p. 128). Their paganism is clearly seen in shamanistic features of their rituals, especially in wedding ceremonies (p. 130) and the ritual of animal sacrifice (p. 133). The Turks absorbed Islam slowly and gradually<sup>26</sup>, at first

<sup>24</sup> Among the examples illustrating the common origin of the huge Turkic world of the present, Validi's books gives the following: the custom of the host's attending his guests at the table (Kirghiz 'амату', Kazan Tatar 'сороһ', and Bashkir 'һорһун'), guests' taking away some of the dishes from the table as a treat for their households 'Әлеш алып кайту', (pp. 42-4), paying the bride price to the bride's relatives and friends to take her from her parents' house (p. 128-9), throwing coins during a wedding (S. 133-4), welcoming guests with bread and salt (p. 158), adopting a grandson by his grandfather (p. 184), younger son's inheriting his parents' house - 'төп йорт' (p. 185) etc.

<sup>25</sup> For example, when a son marries his father's widow - his own step-mother or when a younger brother marries his elder brother's widow (pp. 129-31), the custom of washing oneself with the water from the mouth (p. 132) or killing a sacrificed animal by making an open wound and stopping its beating heart with one's hand (p. 133), similarity between the common legal systems of the Turks and the Mongols, codified in the Great Law (the Yasak) of Genghiz Khan (pp. 132, 135, 142-3). When commenting on Ibn Fadlan's reference to Bashkirs' animal worship, including the crane worship, Validi again stresses the close resemblance and connection of the Ancient Turks to peoples of the Mongolian stock. Like the Oghuz, Altai Turks, Yenisey Kyrgyz or Mongols, continues he, each of the 12 Bashkir tribes had its own totem - a ritual animal or a bird which they worshipped (p. 153-4).

<sup>26</sup> A.Z. Validi writes that, according to Ibn Khordadbeh, as early as the second quarter of the 9th century there were Muslims among the Bulgars and the Burtases. Of note is the mentioning of this Arab geographer that after the Bulgar Khan officially recognized conversion of his country to Islam, part of the Bulgars and Burtases, as well as the Sabir people refused to profess this religion and worship Allah (p. 76, 190, 322). The author states, that according to some sources, about 20 000 Bulgar families (approximately 80 000 people) remained faithful to their beliefs (p. 190).

mostly as “a culture” rather than as religion (p. 135), and quite peacefully. For example, the book states that the Bashkirs’ converting to monotheism was significantly facilitated by the long-term trade contacts between the Khorezm and the province of Shash (Tashkent) (p. 35).

In Validi’s opinion, Islam began to spread on the Volga (the same way it did later, in the 11th–14th centuries) even before the Baghdad Caliph sent his diplomatic mission there. “Islam came to the Volga gradually, the process was assisted by the efforts of people from the present-day Western Turkistan, it complied with the culture and traditions of the Turks, thus acquiring a peculiar local form of Islam”, concludes the author (pp. 169, 307–308). The spread of the *Hanafi Maddhab* among the Turks is explained by the fact that unlike, for example, the Shafi’i school, the Hanafi school was “more tolerant” to certain aspects of everyday life important for both nomadic and settled Turkic-speaking peoples (such as drinking wine, brew, or koumiss). This is why, according to Validi, the Hanafi school “suited” them more than the other *maddhabs* of the Quranic teaching (p. 49).

Conversion to Islam was a turning point in the social life of the Turks. In Validi’s opinion, its impact was not exclusively positive. For example, he mentions an obvious deterioration in the state system. Many of the Turkic Khans became fanatical adherents of the “foreign religion” and were purposefully and persistently destroying the shamanic traditions that had been the foundation of the preceding duumvirate system (pp. 289–90, 292–3). Validi writes bitterly that, as a consequence, the Islamic rulers of Central Asia came to be known as the worst tyrants in history, and no trace was left of the policies previous times when the government intrusion into the citizens’ social and personal lives had not been a common practice (p. 290).

Another important subject that the book deals with is the history of the Bulgars. Summing up all his data, Validi emphasizes that, despite being a nomadic people living in *yurts*, the Volga Bulgars of the early 10<sup>th</sup> century were a civilized and cultured nation that could be compared to the semi-nomadic Uyghurs and the Chumuk tribe of Eastern and Western Turkistan and to the Yenisei Kyrgyz. It is essential that “maintaining a highly developed culture was not characteristic of the short period of transition from nomadic to settled life but was the permanent life style of these peoples that not only survived for centuries under the influence of the long-settled neighbours but was also strong enough to exert certain influence on them in its turn” (p. 181). Validi finds proof of this notion in the case of the nomadic Bulgars who were in many aspects more culturally advanced than the neighbouring sedentary Chuvash people<sup>27</sup>. Here he speaks of the huge *yurt* of

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<sup>27</sup> Validi’s conclusion that there is no direct and necessary connection between the “cultural” level of Oriental peoples and their way of life (nomadic or settled) was completely contrary to Eurocentric (and Marxist including) views on historical processes according to which nomadic societies should have necessarily progressed to the sedentary way of life and arable farming as their main occupation. It was not until the post-Soviet period that a different

the Volga Bulgharia's Khan that was large enough to house as many as a thousand men describing it as a typical nomadic "palace" of Turks and Mongols known as *orda* (horde, *orda*) – "camp" (pp. 182-3). Many a traveler, Arab (Yaqut, Ibn Battuta, Sharaf ad-Din, etc.) as well as European (Giovanni da Pian del Carpine and Marco Polo), were impressed by the size of those edifices that differed in the colour of felt or mats covering the dome and in the style of the exquisite doors, the sort of "the royal doors", that could be made from various metals. It is mentioned that it was precisely those characteristics that gave the *yurt* of Genghis Khan its well-known name of *Altinorda*, the Golden Horde.

In his book Validi also addresses other important, at times controversial issues, including the history of Khazaria "Turks" and the history of the Rus people or the Swedish Normans<sup>28</sup>. The final chapter of the book is a special study on the *Saqaliba* (the plural of *saqlab* in Arabic). As said above, this term often used by Ibn Fadlan denotes, according to Validi, "the fair-skinned Turks and Finns of the Middle and Lower Volga valley"<sup>29</sup> rather than the Slavic peoples as it was believed by many other scholars. Now the wide range of evidence to support his view was supplemented with works by Ibn A'sama al-Kufi<sup>30</sup>, Ibn al-Faqih, al-Biruni (11<sup>th</sup> century), Al-Bakri, Ibn Rustah, Ibn Hurdadbeh (9<sup>th</sup> century), Abu Sa'id Gardezi, Istakhri (10<sup>th</sup> century), Ibn Hawqal (10<sup>th</sup> century), al-Jaihani, al-Khwarizmi and

and well-substantiated opinion began to be spread in Russian historiography: "As such sedentarization should be considered as a sign of social regress rather than progress. As a rule, sedentarization is imposed on a society by some external (natural, military, political, etc) and less often internal (social) factors which negatively affect nomadic economy destroying it and forcing the most affected, suffering nomads to turn to other occupations. This type of sedentarization does not result in rapid and simultaneous development of thickly populated, economically advanced sedentary regions with integrated agriculture and livestock raising economics of the regions... The idea of a potential evolution of nomadic tribes and their inevitable sedentarization... needs to be reconsidered. In Russian historiography this process used to be taken as a sign of historical progress for nomads. This approach overlooks peculiarities of the development of nomadic culture and economy, both dependent on and dictated by natural geographical conditions, thus refusing to acknowledge the specific mentality and ethno-psychology typical of nomads for centuries. Thus, the laws regulating the life of agricultural societies were mechanically applied as valid for nomadic cultures. A linear view on historical processes prevailed in historical science due to the widespread Marxist idea of successive social orders" (Tortika 2006: 20–1, 32–3). See also: (Tortika 2006: 112–29; Bondarenko, Korotaev, Kradin 2002: 9–36).

<sup>28</sup> This topic was also touched upon in some earlier works by Validi, see: (1934; 1936a; 1936b). Ibn Fadlan's Rus (the Rus people) are practically unanimously identified with the Scandinavians in the works of foreign scholars, with references given to Validi's papers, see: (Smyser 1965: 92; Kherman 1986: 40).

<sup>29</sup> Quite a remarkable fact is that Şihabetdin Märcani (Shigabuddin Mardzhanı), a Tatar historian of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was also of the opinion that Ibn Fadlan meant by *saqaliba* all the ethnicities of the Bulghar state characterized by fair complexion (*ак йөзле*), including the Finns, as well as any fair-faced people of other countries, though in Arabic literature the tradition was to apply this term to the Slavs (= *иславан кабиләсендән мэгдүд*) and among them – the Rus, see: (Marjani 1887: 19, 21–23).

<sup>30</sup> Ibn A'sama al-Kufi's information about peoples and tribes of East Europe was first used by Validi and since then has been steadily in academic use, see: (Beilis 1974: 79).

other authors, which resulted in a 37-page long chapter dedicated to the problem (pp. 295-331).

The book also touches upon many minor issues such as Turkic-Magyar contacts (p. 311), Pecheneg cattle breeding, Bulgharia-Khwarezm relations, the Khwarezmian language, etc. Their profoundness can be estimated by specialists only. Altogether the wealth of information contained in Validi's commentary to Ibn Fadlan's *Travel Accounts* is undoubtedly of encyclopedic character. However, at times his comments appear unsystematic or subsidiary to the main topic. An unprepared reader may not find them easy to understand. The absence of indices, glossaries or a bibliography, the style of references and finding aids though was a commonplace in Validi's time today is seen as not quite adequate, and with a great number of typographical errors makes using this book rather a difficult task.

Validi's book on Ibn Fadlan reveals yet another quality of this scholar that will show itself in his future work – his keen Turkic awareness. As an Orientalist he always bore in mind the strong connection between his own particular research tasks and the study of history of the Turkic peoples. A historian with a profound and original approach, he made a contribution to exploring many issues of Turkic history in its broadest sense. Discovering new horizons in the study of the Eurasian peoples' past Validi was a Columbus sailing the sea of Oriental authors' writings to investigate their evidence of the early Turks. He was the first scholar to note the importance of Arab authors and to use their works to reconstruct the events of the Turkic peoples' history unknown from other sources.

Moreover, based on the great bulk of Arabic literature, on the Turkic folklore, on his personal observations, and on available academic literature, Validi's comments and judgments were of great importance for a better understanding of the complicated political, social, economic, ethnic and religious relations in the Volga Region and the Europe-Asia borderline areas at the turn of the second millennium. As an encyclopedic collection, they provided valuable historical and ethnographic information about the peoples of Central Asia and Eastern Europe and about the historical geography of these regions.

It must, no doubt, be recognized that some of Validi's biggest academic accomplishments were his brave attempts at bringing up new scientific issues, posing and defining new problems and trying to find approaches and solutions to them. Those issues included the purposes and results of the Arab embassy to the Bulgars, the grounds of Proto-Turkic unity, the relations between the Turks and the neighbouring Mongols, the Khazars and the Rus (= an ancient Germanic tribe), the languages of the Bulgars and the Khazars and the part and parcel of their state system, the duumvirate<sup>31</sup> and the sacral character of supreme power among the

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<sup>31</sup> To do full justice, it should be mentioned that V.V. Grigoriev was the first to write about diarchy (dual power) with the Khazars, see: (Grigor'ev 1834). This issue was also studied by a Hungarian scholar A. Alföldi in the early 1930s, see: (Alföldi 1933). Of more recent papers, see: (Tsukerman 2002)

steppe people, the religion of the Khazars and the causes of the Kaganate's decline, the meaning and evolution of the *Saqaliba* ethnonym, etc. It was not a long time after Validi's work that many of these issues became the focus of special research<sup>32</sup>.

Not all of Validi's opinions and ideas on Ibn Fadlan's *Travel Accounts* (such as "the great success and importance" of the Baghdad's caliph's embassy to the Volga "in the history of Islam", the "Proto-Turkic-Mongolian" language and the Turko-Mongolian unity, the split of Turkic into Lir-type and Shaz-type, the common origin of the ethnonyms *Bashgird* and *Bulgar*, *Saqaliba* = *Rus* / *Norman*, etc.) were acknowledged by his colleagues, not least because of his noticeable "tendency for an overly positive representation of the Old Turkic civilization" (Dunlop 1949: 312). On the other hand, the achievements of the humanities, especially the level of source analysis in Oriental studies of those days, and the unsatisfactory condition (which remains so today) of the sources on the early medieval history of Eurasia did not allow Validi to provide a complete, full and profound interpretation of all the problems set by Ibn Fadlan's text. Yet it was the works by Validi that provoked some very fruitful discussions on the history of the Old Turks, the Khazars, the Normans / Varangians, etc. In addition, his research helped to introduce the accomplishments of Russian Orientalists to Western scholars. A reviewer of Validi's book, the Austrian Orientalist Hans von Mžik wrote: "We must be especially grateful to him (to Validi – *M.F.*) for the numerous references to academic literature from Russia and Russian Asia, partially unknown in Germany, partially not easily accessible." In his opinion, the book by the Bashkir scholar "once again clearly" demonstrates "the importance of the Russian language to all Orientalists studying Eastern Europe, the Caucasus region, Turkey and Iran" (Mzik 1939: 125)<sup>33</sup>. Thus Validi who had been exiled from the Soviet Union was accepted in Europe as a Russian science envoy.

Upon returning to Turkey in 1939 Validi was forced to stop his studies on Ibn Fadlan. The second edition of "Ibn Fadlan's *Travel Accounts*" was never printed; neither was it prepared to be published in Turkish. According to Hellmut Ritter, Validi's friend and colleague in Istanbul, the only piece by him published on the subject in Turkish was an article *Ibn Fadlan* written as an entry for the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* in 1950.

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<sup>32</sup> See (Czeglédý 1944; Harmatta 1946–1948; Gabain 1949; Dunlop 1954; Artamonov 2001; Szeglédý 1966; Bombaci 1970; László 1974; Zakhoder 1962: 203-29; Kalinina 2005 etc).

<sup>33</sup> See also: (Spuler 1940: 201).

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