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THE OLD EAST SLAVIC TOPONYM *KYJEVЪ* IN THE ARAB-MUSLIM GEOGRAPHICAL LITERATURE

Abstract

The article deals with the transcriptions of the Old East Slavic toponym *Kyjevъ* as found in the Arabic classical geographical literature. The author critically assesses the latest contributions to the study of this toponym and the respective readings offered by the orientalists since the times of Christian Martin Frähn. Based on the well-known readings and paleographic reconstructions, the author elaborates on several formative models (stemmata) of the Arabic transcriptions of the toponym *Kyjevъ* which are all interrelated and chronologically attuned to the prehistorical change *kū-* > *kī* in Common Slavic.

1. Introduction

The name of the Ukrainian city *Kyjiv* has long been the focus of numerous studies concerned with the origin and attestations of this toponym in Slavic and non-Slavic languages. As a starting point for discussion, one always takes the Old East Slavic toponym *Kyjevъ* as attested in the oldest extant East Slavic annalistic text, the Primary Chronicle, a compilation of two thematically distinct textual components brought together in the beginning of the 12th century; the segment consisting of tales dealing with the introduction of Christianity in Rus' offers a typical legend of a medieval town's foundation. According to the 1377 Laurentian Redaction of the Primary Chronicle:

> […] there were three brothers, *Kii* [instead of *Kyi*], *Ščekъ* and *Xorivъ*, and their sister was named *Lybedъ*. *Kii* lived upon the hill where the Boričъ's trail now is, and *Ščekъ*

dwelt upon the hill now named Ščekovica, while on the third resided *Xorivъ*, after whom, this hill is named Xorevic. And they built a town and named it *Kijevъ* [instead of *Kyjevъ*] after their oldest brother (PC: 9; Laur. 1377: 54).

In the latest interlinear collation and paradosis of the Primary Chronicle, one finds the etymological spelling (with the back *y* rendered by Cyrillic *ы*) of the form *Kyi* (*Кыи*) and *Kyj* (*Кый*) for the name of the oldest brother, and *Kyjevъ* (*Кыевъ*) and *Kyjevь* (*Кыевь*) for the name of the town (Ostrowski 2003 vol. 1: 44, 46). As Strumiński (1996: 121) pointed out, and rightly so, the Slavic form "town" should be better translated as 'a small fortified town'; in fact, some redactions of the Primary Chronicle have the diminutive forms *gorodokъ* and *gradъkъ* in place of Church Slavonic *gradъ* in the aforementioned excerpt from the Laurentian codex (Ostrowski 2003 vol. 1: 45). What is important for our discussion is the fact that the name of *Kyjь* serves as the eponym of *Kyjevъ* > *Kyjiv* because such is the logic of Slavic world formation (Strumiński 1996: 122; Trubačev 2003: 145).

In this paper, I review the aforementioned "logic" with the help of Arabic transcriptions of the Old East Slavic toponym *Kyjevъ* which have been recently misconstrued by Nazarenko (2010) in his pursuit of refuting the traditional interpretation of the transcriptions found in the Arab-Muslim geographical output (see Ahmad 1995; Kračkovskij 2004).[1] Accordingly, in Section 2, I provide a brief overview of Nazarenko's counterarguments followed, in Section 3, by a reassessment of the transcriptions of the toponym *Kyjivъ* in Arabic-Islamic records. It is my intention, based on the achievements made by the Polish oriental school, to make the respective transcriptions arranged in a more comprehensible way so that the Slavists, who are not familiar with the medieval Arabic-Islamic source material, can use them in further discussions on this subject.

2. Issues of relative chronology

Nazarenko (2010: 86) refuted the Arabic attestations as chronologically unreliable for positing the prehistorical change of the hypothetical **Kujevъ* to the historically attested *Kyjivъ*. At first blush, his major argument looks compelling. Nazarenko (2010: 86) claimed that all of the available Arabic transcriptions, in addition to the Latin form *Cuiewa* attested in the 11th-century *Chronicon Thietmari*, go to the mid-10th century and cannot reflect the earlier change *kū-* > *kī* in Common Slavic; in other words, Arabic *Kūyāba* does not match chronologically "Old Russian" *Kyjevъ*. Referring, in particular, to Zaxoder (1962: 49–51, 74–76, 1967: 101–102), Nazarenko (2010: 91) argued that the principle Arabic-Persian transcription *Kūyāba* was incorporated by different Muslim geographers from a work authored in the early 10th century

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[1]   It should be borne in mind that the human geography of the Muslim world was intrinsically Arabic with two notable exception of two Persians, namely, the anonymous author of the *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam* ('The Regions of the World', 982–983) (Minorsky 1937) and Nāṣir-ī Khusraw (Miquel 1973: 2, fn. 2).

by al-Balkhī. According to Nazarenko (2010: 91), a student deals in this case with one and the same attestation excerpted from al-Balkhī's account about three kinds of *Rūs*. This account was borrowed by al-Iṣṭakhrī whose work was also prepared in Persian where Kyjiv is named *Kūnaba* which could be purportedly explained by a paleographic confusion of one and the same character in Arabic script (Nazarenko 2010: 91).[2] Finally, to prove the chronological discrepancy between, on the one hand, the Arabic transcription *Kūyāba* and its attested variants dating back to the 10th century and, on the other hand, Old East Slavic *Kyjevъ* alongside the Byzantine Greek forms like *Κίοβα* and *Κιοάβα* found in Constantine Porphirogenitus (10th century), Nazarenko (2010: 93) surmised that all the aforementioned forms "testify unambiguously to the existence of Slavic *Kyj-* as early as the mid-10th century".

   Taken at a closer inspection, Nazarenko's arguments look less persuasive. First, he erroneously provided the character *rā'* in its isolated form (ر) rather than its medial form as the paleographic reason behind the existence of different variants of the form *Kūyāba*. Second, even if the respective passage goes back to the text authored by the Persian polymath al-Balkhī in the early 10th century (Goeje 1871; Bejlis 1960: 81–86), one should bear in mind that al-Balkhī might have used different sources for his geographical treatise.[3] These sources could retain the older form with the long *kū-* as attested in later compilations belonging to the early medieval "Central Asian-Khorasanian Codex" or, the "Caspian Codex" (Zaxoder 1962: 8, 26–33; Pritsak 1967: 3–4). In fact, the "Caspian Codex" could have appeared before the 10th century, the date which is considered by Nazarenko as contradictory for the alleged change *kū-* > *kī*. Ernst Eduard Kunik, a Russian historian of German stock, who, looking into al-Bakrī's *Kitāb al-masālik wa-l-mamālik*, brought attention to the secondary nature of the compilations made by Kardīzī (11th century) and Ibn Rusteh (903–913); according to him, their accounts had been based on the primary text authored by a polymath living either at the very end of the 9th century or in the very beginning of the 10th century (Rozen, Kunik 1878: 65–67; Marquart 1903: xxxi). As early as 1928, based on Jaubert (1836–1840: xix), Reinaud (1848: lxiii) and his other predecessors (see Smirnov 1928: 172; Bejlis 1960: 82; Kračkovskij 2004: 290) assumed that al-Balkhī might have used the geographical work of al-Jayhānī, who was active at the court of the Samanids in the 10th century, as revised by Ibn al-Faqīh in 903 (see Zimonyi 2016: 7–10, 13–15).

   This said, there appear to be weak grounds for positing a chronological discrepancy between the Arabic transcriptions and the actual vowel sound observed in Old East Slavic *Kyjevъ*. Assuming that the weak grounding is correct, the fact that

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[2]   Zaxoder (1967: 102) cited in fact *Kūyāna* as found in the Persian-language version of al-Iṣṭakhrī's 10th-century *Kitāb al-masālik wa-l-mamālik* (Liber viarum et regnorum) (see Seippel 1896–1928: ٥٦) which is held at the depository of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Zaxoder mentioned also the parallel passage with the form *Kūyāba* in the Persian work *Ḥudūd al-'Ālam* 'Regionis mundi' (982–983) (see Minorsky 1937: 159)

[3]   Al-Balkhī wrote his geographical work in 920, or a little later in his old age (Barthold 1937: 15). The work was probably entitled *Ṣuwar al-Aqālīm* ('Mappa orbium terrestrium'), although the correct title is yet to be established (Ahmad 1995: 76).

Kūyāba became widely accepted can be tentatively explained by parallel Byzantine Greek forms attested in Chapter 9 of the *De Administrando Imperio* by Constantine Porphyrogenitus: τὸ Κιοάβα '[to the stronghold] of Kyjiv', εἰς τὸν Κίοβα 'to Kyjiv', πρὸς τὸν Κίαβον 'to Kyjiv', ἀπο τὸν Κίαβον 'from Kyjiv' (DAI: 56–62). Additionally, leaving aside the discussion of Arabic phonological constraints affecting transcription of Slavic words (Lewicki 1945: 100–101; Pauliny 1999: 11–15; Lewicka-Rajewska 2004: 15–19; Danylenko 2020: 16–19), I concur with Strumiński (1996: 125) that the Arabic transcriptions might be older than the Greek 10th-century names of *Kyjevъ*. Indirectly this assumption is corroborated by the first attestation of the Old East Slavic name *Kyjevъ* coming also from the 10th century: קייוב (*Qyywḇ* or *Qiyoḇ*), found in a letter by the Jewish community of *Kyjevъ* from the first half of the 10th century (Golb, Pritsak 1982: 12).

In the remainder I concentrate on the formative models of the well-known Arabic transcriptions of the toponym *Kyjevъ* and the reconstruction of their stemmata as I did it for the name *Rus'* (Danylenko 2004, 2006: 3–30).

3. Transcriptions of the toponym Kyjevъ

Returning to the Caspian Codex, the accessible source material allows to posit two versions of al-Balkhī's account about three kinds of *Rūs*: the older, by al-Iṣṭakhrī in his *Kitāb al-masālik wa-l-mamālik* ('Liber viarum et regnorum', first redaction 930–933; second redaction 950) (Kračkovskij 2004: 197), and the younger by Ibn Ḥawqal in his *Ṣūrat al-arḍ* ('Liber imagines terrae', first redaction 967; second redaction 977) (Kramers 1932: 16–17; Pritsak 1967: 3–4; Kračkovskij 2004: 199). Transferred into the later compilations, the underlying Arabic transcription of the name *Kyjevъ* could have become misconstrued due to common copyist's errors (Lewicki 1956: 103–106; Pauliny 1999: 11–15).

In al-Iṣṭakhrī's account about three kinds of *Rūs*, one comes across the transcription كويابه / كُويَابَة (*Kūyāba / Kūyābah*):

والرُّوس هم ثلاثة اصناف فصنف هم اقرب الي بلغار وملكهم يقيم بمدينة تسمَّي كُويَابَة	And there are three kinds of Rūs, and one of them is close to the Bulghar, and their prince resides in the town called Kūyābah.[4]
(al-Iṣṭakhrī, ٢٢٦–٢٢٥)	

The same transcription is repeated in Ibn Ḥawqal's *Ṣūrat al-arḍ* which was largely based on al-Iṣṭakhrī's passage (see Reinaud 1848: lxxxiii–lxxxiv; Kramers 1938–1939: 397). The reading *Kūyāba* is attested in some other sources influenced by the Caspian Codex, in particular in the Persian treatise *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam* (982–983) which provides a description of Kyjiv and its inhabitants: "*Kūyāba* is the town [land?] of the *Rūs* lying nearest to the Islamic lands" (Minorsky 1937: 159).

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4   The translation from the Arabic here and hereafter is mine.

The reading *Kūyāba* was first proposed by Christian Martin Frähn, a Russian historian of German stock, who used the Leiden manuscript of Ibn Ḥawqal's work where the transcription of the toponym *Kyjevъ* did not have consonant diacritics – *Kū.ā.a*. Frähn (1823: 149, 257–259) offered the reading *Kūyāba*, which became widely accepted, as well as *Kūyāwa*, although in total, one could come up with 24 different readings (see Frähn 1823: 149).[5]

Having taken into consideration the oldest Gotha Manuscript of al-Iṣṭakhrī's work dating back to 1173 and the latest publication of Ibn Ḥawqal by Kramers (1938–1939; see also Zimonyi 1990: 24–25), Pritsak (1967: 7) concluded that the transcription which unmistakably represented Kyjiv was transmitted in two otherwise identical variants; they were abstracted by the two geographers from the name of the third kind of *Rūs*:

a) al-Iṣṭakhrī has the name written with a *thā'*, included in the geographical dictionary of Yāqūt who referred to the text of al-Iṣṭakhrī: كوثابه (*Kūthāba*, see Frähn 1823: 147; Wüstenfeld 1869: 44, 318);

b) Ibn Ḥawqal spells it with a *yā'*: كويابه (*Kūyāba*).

To get a full picture of the various transcriptions of this name, one should resort to a transcription found in one of the later compilations in al-Idrīsī's *Kitāb Rujār* ('Liber Rogerii' 1138/1139–1153); thus, in Section 5 of Climate 6 in this work one finds an expression مدينة كاو (*madīnah Kāw*) (Opus, part 8: 912) 'town of *Kāw*', which was read by Jaubert (1836–1840, vol. 2: 398; Tuulio-Tallgren 1936: 136–138) as *Kaw* 'Kiew'. Al-Idrīsī in this case is, to be sure, less reliable as compared with Ibn Ḥawqal and even more so with al-Iṣṭakhrī (Novosel'cev 1965: 412; see Lewicki 1945: 35). At first sight, it is tempting to conclude that the transcription *Kāw* may be a result of interference in oral communication or of a mere scribal mistake. In addition to the variant كاوْ with a *sukūn* above the *wāw*, the extant eyewitnesses of the *Kitāb Rujār* have at their disposal three more graphic variants, to wit, كناو/كنار and كنار which all seem to testify to the inexact (corrupted) medial part of the transcription (see Konovalova 2006: 208).

In Section 6 of Climate 6 of the *Kitāb Rujār* the author offers, instead of the variant كويابه, the spelling كوكيانة which was read by Konovalova (2006: 232) as *Kūkiyāna*.[6] The Russian historian argued that this geographical name might have nothing to do with the name *Kūyāba*, that is, Kyjiv as attested in earlier narratives about the three kinds of *Rūs*. According to Konovalova (2006: 232–233), the mention of *Kūkiyāna* might have been added by al-Idrīsī in the description of Cuman towns; it is not therefore surprising that the town *Kūkiyāna* was not indicated on the geographical map appended to al-Idrīsī's work.

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5   To give an example of an alternative reading, one should mention the vocalization *Kūyāna* in Tumanskij (1896–1897: 133; also Smirnov 1928: 194–195). In general, the multitude of different readings tend to make it difficult, according to Bejlis (1960: 85), to associate *Kūyāba* with the name of the Old Ukrainian town.

6   In the edition of 1970–1983, among several variants one form is provided with a different final consonant and a different vowel diacritic above the second *kāf*, that is, كوكيانه (*Kūkayāna*) (Opus, part 8: 917). This reading, however, does not affect a possible common denominator.

If one agrees with the allegedly later insertion of this passage, then another assumption advanced by Novosel'cev may appear plausible. Without going into the phonological intricacies behind the respective transcriptions, Novosel'cev (1965: 416) asserted that the reading *Kūyāba* is closer to the underlying East Slavic form, "and in some variants it is almost of the same type with that form". Novosel'cev's assertion is rather impressionistic from the linguistic point of view, although some sound correspondences were provided by Bejlis (1960: 85). In view of some modern dialectal forms like Ukrainian *kujava* 'a steep hill' or Polish *kujawy* 'sand hill' (Stryžak 1985: 79; see SJP, vol. 2: 621), Rospond's (1968: 106–110) hypothesis, although not fully corroborated in terms of relative chronology, seems to refute Novosel'cev's reasoning. Rospond argued, in particular, that the reading *Kūyāva* (also *Kūyāba*) changing into *Kyjāva (also *Kyjāba) is close to the Byzantine Greek attestations rather than to the actual name of the town, to wit, the patrial formation *Kyjevъ* 'Kyjь's settlement'. This explanation still have some chronological counterarguments in regards to the change *kū-* > *kī* (cf. Nazarenko 2010: 86).[7]

In order to further expand the understanding of this transcription, Hrbek (1954: 170, 1955: 120) matched the reading *Kaw* 'Kiew' in Jaubert with the one recorded by Abū Ḥāmid al-Gharnāthī in his geographical work of 1162, bearing a religious and cosmographical stamp (see Lewicki 1951/1952; Hrbek 1955: 111–115); in section 24 of his work published by Dubler in 1953, one reads:

وصلتُ الي مدينة من الصقالبة، يقال لها غوركومان،

فيها من أبناء المغاربة الألوف، على صورة الأتراك،

يتكلّمون بكلام الترك، ويرمون بانشاب مثل الترك،

ويعرفون في تلك البلاد بحنه.

(Dubler 1953, Arabic text: 25)

And I arrived in a town of the Slavs called *Ghūrkūmān'* where thousands of the descendents of the Maghribians live. They look like Turks, speak Turkish and shoot arrows like the Turks, and they are known in this land as *Ḥ.n.h* (cf. Dubler 1953, Spanish translation: 64; Hrbek 1955: 120).

Dubler (1953: 232) read the transcription غوركومان as *Gūr-Kūman*, where the first part could be connected to the concept of a fortified place, cf. γύρα in Constantine Porphyrogenitus which is translated as 'rounds' (DAI: 62), and the second to the name of Cumans, a Turkic nomadic people; this reading, according to Dubler (1953: 233), would denote a Cuman stronghold: 'Fuerte Cumano'. Hrbek (1954: 170, 1955: 119) refuted the aforementioned reading since the respective place on the map reproduced by Dubler was to be found at the Prypjat' river draining into the Dnieper river, to wit, in the place of the modern Ukrainian city of Kyjiv. Hrbek (1955: 119) offered, instead, the following paleographic solution: غردكوياو *Ghurud Kūyāw* as a construction of two Slavic words, *Gorod(ъ) Kyjev(ъ)* 'The town of Kyjiv'. Phonetically, this reconstruction looks plausible, at least in regards to the first component. First of all, in Slavic

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[7]   For other hypotheses concerned with names of the Ukrainian toponym Kyjiv in Arabic-Islamic records, see Bejlis (1960: 86).

transcriptions, the *ghayn* character (غ) stands for the Slavic velar stop [g] (Lewicki 1945: 116, 1956: xvi). Second, the presence of the *g* sound in the form **gorod(ъ)* does not contradict the relative chronology of its spirantization which might have taken place in the late 12ᵗʰ century (Shevelov 1979: 355).

Apart from Hrbek's reading, which looks paleographically, historically, and geographically feasible, one can posit the existence of two formative models (stemmata) of the transcriptions of the East Slavic toponym *Kyjevъ*:

(1)   كو (*Kāw*)

(2a)   كوبابه (*Kūyāba*) / كوثابه (*Kūthāba*)

(2b)   كويانه (*Kūyāna*)

I argue that the formative model in stemma (1) is to be found outside the Caspian Codex. Stemma (2b), typical of the Caspian Codex, presents a transcription of an older East Slavic formative which looks ever more pronounced in stemma (2a). As in (2a), the reading *Kūyāna* goes back to not earlier than the 6ᵗʰ century since it still retains the back position of *kū-* (> *kī*) (Shevelov 1964: 267). The formative model as reconstructed for the transcription *Kūyāna* may have derived from the name of the town of Kyjiv when it was still called *Kyjь* (< ** Kūjь*) thus providing a logical base for the name of its inhabitants (Strumiński 1996: 125).

As Strumiński (1996: 126) argued, and rightly so, there is a formal sameness of *Kyjь*, a name of the legendary founder of the town of Kyjiv, and *Kyjь*, a settlement name, from Late Common Slavic**Kyjjь* with the partial suffix *-jь*. The function of the latter suffix was the same as that of *-evъ/-ovъ*, although chronologically the patrial form **Kyjjь* antedated the appearance of the patrial formation *Kyjevъ* 'Kyjь's settlement'. Phonetically, the patrial form **Kyjjь* was most difficult to be transcribed into Arabic which may explain the emergence of paleographically inexact *Kāw* in stemma (1). There is, however, another possibility which was discussed by Lewicki (1938: 94–95). In a map attached to the manuscript of al-Idrīsī's *Kitāb Rujār* he proposed to reconstitute a *yā'* after the *kāf*; when reading this in the Maghrebic manner, one obtains *K(i)jēw* where the *'alif* is replaced by an [ē] (Lewicki 1938: 95):

كياو (*K(i)jēw*) < كو (*Kāw*) (Lewicki 1954, part 2: 195)

The proposed reading changes stemma (1) in that it represents a branching within the possessive (patrial) model based on the suffix *-evъ/-ovъ*:

(1a)   كياو (*K(i)jēw*)

(1b)   كو (*Kāw*)

One deals, therefore, with two major stemmata which all have paleographic variants. Stemma (1) and stemma (2) can be linked via model (1a) and model (2a). Within stemma 2, however, model (2b) *Kūyāna* stands out. The latter may reflect the Early East Slavic **Kūjěnъ* (*gardъ*) which could have been reflected in Old Scandinavian

KœnugarðR (Trubačev 2003: 145); remarkably, the form *Kūjěnъ* (*gardъ*) is still retained in folk oral tradition, cf. *Kujanov gorod* and the like (Schramm 2002: 197). The prehistorical change *kū-* (> *kī*) accepted, one obtains *Kūjēnъ > *Kyjěnъ* (Arabic *Kūyāna*) > Old East Slavic *Kijane* (988), *Kyjaně* (1024), *Kyjany* (1069), *Kyjane* (1093) 'Kyj's people/inhabitants' (Stryžak 1985: 78) where the patrial suffix *-ěn-* appears as *-an-* after a *CS + j* sequence (see Andersen 2017: 8, 13). Old East Slavic *Kievljane* 'the inhabitants of Kyjiv' as reflected in the Primary Chronicle (Laur. 1377: 56, 67) is a result of a later contamination of model (1a) and model (2a) initially with a patrial meaning. This is why the new derivative with the semantics 'inhabitants of' is not attested in Early Medieval Arabic-Islamic geographical works.

4. Conclusion

As the foregoing survey shows (cf. Danylenko 2020: 27–33), there is no purported chronological discrepancy as postulated by Nazarenko (2010) between the 10th-century Arabic transcriptions of the type *Kūyāba* of the toponym *Kyjivъ* and the actual "Old Russian" (Old East Slavic or, Old Ukrainian) form *Kyjevъ*. In fact, the stemmata of the formative models as reconstructed from the transcriptions found in the Arab-Muslim geographical literature prove that the respective Arabic-Persian attestations go back, as was hypothesized as early as 1878 by Kunik, to the pre-Balkhī period, thereby retaining the back position of *kū-*.

The variety of different transcriptions can be reduced to a few stemmata which belong to both the Caspian Codex and beyond it. Stemma (1) *Kāw* as found in al-Idrīsī's *Kitāb Rujār* was first reconstructed by Lewicki and appears to represent a branching within the East Slavic possessive (patrial) model based on the suffix *-evъ/-ovъ* and can be therefore connected to stemma (2) via model (1a) *K(i)jēw* and model (2a) *Kūyāba/Kūthāba*. Stemma (2b) *Kūyāna* might reflect Old East Slavic *Kūjēnъ* with the patrial suffix *-ěn-*; after the change *kū-* > *kī* had taken place, the East Slavic form transformed into *Kijane/Kyjaně/Kyjany* where the patrial suffix *-ěn-* appears as *-an-* after a *CS + j* sequence.

In sum, the critique by Nazarenko is not incidental. The Slavists remain incognizant of the source material found in the Arab-Muslim geographical literature. The problem lies in how in the future one can bridge the gap between Arabic transcriptions and their interpretation by Slavists.

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