

## ABOUT ONE KHAZAR TITLE IN IBN FADLĀN

Ibn Faḍlān, an Arab author well informed about Khazaria, while describing its political system after his visit to the Khazarian capital Itil in 922, names (after the sacral ruler, the great *Khaqan*, or *Qaḡan*) only three high-ranking officials of the state. According to Ibn Faḍlān, these three, “being the deputies”, the author says, of each other in hierarchical succession, are (i) *Khaqan Bek (Qaḡan Beg)* actually ruling over the country; (ii) *Kündür Qaḡan*; and (iii) *javšiḡar (?)*. The Arab author says nothing about the functions the last two performed in the state. Both *Kündür Qaḡan* and *javšiḡar* are mentioned in the final section of the famous “Book” of Ibn Faḍlān, which is missing in the unique Meshhed manuscript of this writing but present in the *Mu‘jam al-buldān* by Yāqūt who abundantly cites Ibn Faḍlān's work [1].

The word *kündür (kundur)*, after numerous unsuccessful attempts to determine its origin, has remained unexplained on the basis of Turkic languages. As for the title *javšiḡar*, mentioned by Ibn Faḍlān, its interpretation created some special difficulties because of a lack of clarity in its reading.

Two alternative readings — *javšiḡar* and *javišḡar* — were suggested by the Russian scholars A. P. Kovalevsky and I. Yu. Krachkovsky correspondingly. The first was the translator of Ibn Faḍlān's work into Russian, while the second was the editor of the first publication of this translation in which the Meshhed manuscript had been taken into account. In the commentaries to this translation an opinion, once offered by Ch. Frehn, who considered the term a variant of the Turkish word *çavuş (çaus)* denoting “a police and war official”, was supported [2]. Subsequently, A. P. Kovalevsky suggested another reading of the word, *javišḡir ~ çavišḡir*, considering it to better correspond to the harmony of vowels characteristic of the Turkic languages [3].

The obscurity of the term employed by Ibn Faḍlān stimulated Z. V. Togan and A. Zajaczkowski to undertake further investigation. The scholars have singled out two

components of the lexeme: *jav* and *šiḡar*, and suggested conjectures which, however, contradicted the spelling of the word attested in Yāqūt's work [4]. The conjectures were deservedly acclaimed by P. Golden who accepted the reading *javašiḡar* [5]. However, the divergences of the word's spelling in eight surviving manuscripts of the *Mu‘jam al-buldān* are minor and concern only vocalisation and diacritical marks [6].

Meanwhile, it is possible to propose, without infringing upon the spelling given in the work, another reading of the word — *jav šunḡar*, not *jav šiḡar*. In this case, its rendering presents no difficulty. We can find the Turkic word *šunḡar ~ šonḡar* (“falcon”, “gerfalcon”) in al-Khwārazmī (10th century) — as *šunḡar*, in Maḥmūd Kāshgharī (11th century) — *šunqur*, in *Muḥabbat-nāma* (13th century) — *šunḡar* [7].

The initial part in the word — *jav*, or *čav*, as A. P. Kovalevsky read it more precisely afterwards — apparently traces back to the Old Turkic *čavli* (“falcon”, “hunting bird”), recorded in one of the Yenisey inscriptions (8th—9th centuries), and, later, in Maḥmūd Kāshgharī. It is interesting that in the *Qūtādghū Bilik* (11th century) there is a mention of a court official title — *čavli beg* (verse 4068) [8].

Judging from the usual system for designating the highest officials in Khazaria, the term used by Ibn Faḍlān has been given in an abbreviated form, and the full form can be reconstructed as *čavšunḡar [beg]* (“head of the royal falcon hunting”), which is completely identical to the title *čavli beg* attested in *Qūtādghū Bilik* by Yūsuf Balāsāgūnī who names *čavli beg* among the highest dignitaries in the state of ilek-khans.

The context of the passage in Ibn Faḍlān where the term in question is employed enables us to assume that the “deputies” of *Qaḡan Beg*, namely, *Kündür Qaḡan* and *čavšunḡar beg*, fulfilled administrative functions similar to those of army commander and of *ḡājib* in the Qarakhanid empire.

## Notes

1. [A. P. Kovalevskii], *Puteshestvie Ibn-Fadlana na Volgu* (Ibn Faḍlān's Travel to the Volga) (Moscow, Leningrad, 1939), p. 84; see also his *Kniga Akhmeda ibn-Fadlana o ego puteshestvii na Volgu v 921—922 gg.* (Aḥmad Ibn Faḍlān's Book on His Travel to the Volga in 921/922) (Kharkov, 1956), p. 146.
2. [A. P. Kovalevskii], *Puteshestvie*, pp. 167, 184.
3. A. P. Kovalevskii, *Kniga*, p. 269.