

Southern Hungary and Serbia in al-Idrisi's *Geography*

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The reign of the Norman Sicilian King Roger II (1130-1154) represented a significant rise for the Norman Kingdom. In their foreign policy, the Normans clashed for dominance in the Mediterranean with the Byzantine Empire, whereas internally, an economically stable, ethnically and religiously mixed country was being established. The Norman Kingdom owed its economic rise, above all, to the grain trade. In the time of Roger II and his successors in Sicily, the international trade in agricultural products was highly developed, first of all concerning grain, but also salted meat and commodities. Trading was most frequently done with Tunisia, and the Normans had an international trade treaty with Egypt.²

The kings of Sicily, especially Roger II, supported learned men of Greek or Arab descent. For example, the Greek scholar Eugenio resided on the island and was for some time involved in the Sicilian king's administration work, while he also translated Ptolemy's *Optics* from Arabic into Latin. Therefore, apart from his native Greek, he also spoke Arabic and Latin, the three most important languages in Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Orient at the time.³ Furthermore, also in Sicily, Enrico, named Aristippus after Socrates' disciple, translated works from Greek into Latin. He translated Plato's dialogues *Meno* and *Phaedrus*.⁴

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² For more details on Norman economy, see an excellent overview by David Abulafia, "The crown and the economy under Roger II and his successors," in *Italy, Sicily and the Mediterranean 1100-1400* (London: Variorum, 1987), 1-14.

³ Vera Falkenhausen, Eugenio di Palermo, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Vol. 43 (1993), www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/eugenio-da-palermo_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/ (accessed on 27 January 2020).

⁴ Ezio Franceschini, "Enrico Aristippo," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 4 (1962), [www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/enrico-aristippo_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/enrico-aristippo_(Dizionario-Biografico)) (accessed on 27 January 2020).

Apart from them, a crucial role at the court of King Roger II, in light of the topic of this paper, was that of traveller and geographer, Abu Abdullah Muhammad al-Idrisi.

Al-Idrisi maintained that, like many descendants of prominent Muslim families of the time, he came from the family of the Prophet Muhammad himself. One of his ancestors was Idrisi II, who was the ruler of Malaga in the eleventh century. However, he was most likely born in Ceuta in 1100, although a significant number of scholars treat with caution almost all the information in his biography, with the exception of the year he completed his voluminous work. There is one piece of circumstantial information with respect to the year 1100; namely, Idrisi, in his writings, explicitly states that he was 16 years old when he visited Asia Minor in the year 510 of the Islamic calendar (1115-1116 AD). Thus, one can infer the year of his birth. He was educated at Cordoba, which was at the time the centre of Islamic science and culture in Arabic Spain. He travelled extensively throughout Spain, toured North Africa and was also familiar with the Arabic East. It is not known exactly how and when he came to the court of King Roger of Sicily, but he closely worked with the king for 15 years to produce his work, thus receiving his epithet *aş-Şiqillî*. His famous work is entitled *Kitab nuẓhat al-muštak fi htirāk al-afaḳ* – *The pleasure excursion of one who is eager to traverse the regions of the world*, or shorter, *al-Kitāb al-ruġārî* or *Kitāb Ruġār* – *The Book of Roger*, named after the king it was dedicated to. It is known in scholarly circles under its own name, which is still commonly used today – *Geography*. This work was completed either between 10 December and 20 December 1153, or in January 1154, or, as Idrisi states, in the month of *shawwal* of the Islamic calendar. Idrisi is believed to have died around 1165, though this information is also not entirely certain.⁵

⁵ For more details on his life see, Boris Nedkov, *Bŭlgarija i susednite i űemi prez XII vek spored geografijata na Idrisi* [Bulgaria and its neighboring countries in the XII century according to the “Geography” of Idrisi]. Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1960, 9-13; Elter István, „Magyarország Idrisi Földrajzi művében,” [Hungary in the geographical work of Idrisi] *Acta universitatis Szegediensis de Attila József Nominatae, Acta historica*, toms LXXXII (1985): 53-55; Giovanni Oman, “al-Idrīsī,” in *Encyclopedia of Islam Vol. 3*, ed. H. A. R. Gibb et al. (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 1986), 1032-1035; Ramazan Şeşen, “Idrīsī Şerīf,” in *Tŭrkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi: İbnü'l-Cezzâr-İhvân-ı Müslimîn* [Encyclopedia of Islam by Turkish Diyanet], ed. Süleyman N. Akçeşme (Ankara: TDV, 2000), 493-495.

It should be noted that even this end date for *The Book of Roger*, as well as much of Idrisi's biography, was massively criticized by Henri Bresc and Annliese Nef in their revision of

In his work, Idrisi describes many of the countries he travelled to, such as Lombardy, Sicily, and all of Italy. He also describes Eastern and South-eastern Europe, including Poland, the Czech lands, Hungary, Bulgaria, Serbia, and finally Byzantium. Upon his return to Palermo, Idrisi asked the king to help him draw up a map of the countries he visited. The king thus ordered that a large map be made of pure silver. The masters then drew seven climates (seven large sections travelled through by Idrisi), followed by cities, inhabited and uninhabited places, hills, forests, lakes, seas, and more. In order to complement this large disk, or rather, silver board, Roger II asked Idrisi to produce a book describing the cities and territories on the map, including their characteristics, typical food, representative types of cereals and plants, and trade. The work on the map took fifteen years to complete, probably starting in 1138, when Idrisi most likely came to the court of the Sicilian ruler. In the preface, Idrisi points out that his goal was to reach new insights. He critically studied the sources, but was not satisfied with them particularly because they did not offer new insights or contribute to the development of science. As he states, Idrisi also collected oral traditions, getting his information from ordinary people. However, the cartographic results of his research are relatively poor. The map composed in the court of King Roger II cannot be used for scientific purposes as a serious geographical work. Nevertheless, Idrisi's work is crucial for cartography so its significance and precision cannot be denied entirely. Following Ptolemy's model, he divided the regions he travelled into seven climates, i.e., seven lines of land extending north from the equator. Idrisi also delimits seven seas and he further divides each climate into ten sections, each of them being a geographical whole. Although he reports distances in miles, he also refers to them in days – so a day of light travel equals 23-25 miles, a day of more difficult travel amounts to 30-36 miles, whereas travelling by water makes about 100 miles a day. Of course, when making these calculations, the accessibility of the terrain should be

Jaubert's French translation of Idrisi's work, while Nef did the same in her own work, c.f. *Idrisi, La première géographie de l'Occident*, ed. and trans. Henri Bresc and Anlièse Nef (Paris: GF Flammarion, 1999); Anlièse Nef, 'Al-Idrīsī: un complément d'enquête biographique,' in *Géographes et voyageurs au Moyen Âge*, ed. Henri Bresc and Emmanuelle Tixier du Mesnil (Paris: Presses universitaires de Paris Ouest, 2010), 53-66.

considered. Although he writes simply, his style aspires to art in a beautiful and harmonious Arabic.⁶

Idrisi's sources are diverse. First of all, he used all the Arab scholars, cartographers, and geographers available to him; the most significant being Ibn Hawqal, *al-Khwarizmi*, and al-Biruni. Furthermore, he used classical works, most significantly those of Ptolemy (both the Greek version and the Arabic translation); however, it is also worth noting that other ancient and Byzantine authors were available to him in the library at the Norman court. A significant corpus of his sources is composed of oral news he compiled from diplomatic missions at the court of the Norman king in Palermo; also, it was from these sources that he was likely able to learn a great deal about Hungary and events taking place in the kingdom. Lewicki believed that a number of documents were also available to Idrisi while he was preparing *The Book of Roger*. Idrisi himself alluded to using the royal archives. While he portrayed Asia and the Islamic world mostly on the basis of Islamic geographers and authors, he described almost all of Europe by mainly using oral sources from the Norman court and the navy of the Sicilian king. Finally, Ptolemy represented one of his primary sources as he portrayed most of the world according to him.⁷

The information provided by Idrisi is well known in historiography. A critical edition of the Arabic text of his *Geography* was published in several volumes in Palermo.⁸ Among the editions of this valuable piece, a prominent version, authored by Tadeusz Lewicki, includes the Arabic

⁶ Tadeusz Lewicki, *Polska i sąsiednie w świetle "Księgi Rogera,"* I [Poland and neighbouring countries in the light of Book of Roger] (Kraków: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1945), 1-124; B. Nedkov, *Bilgarija*, 13-15 particularly refuted the scientific features of Idrisi's map. G. Škivanić, "Idrisijevi podaci o jugoslovenskim zemljama (1154) [Idrisi's data on Yugoslav countries (1154)]." in *Monumenta cartographica Jugoslaviae II*, ed. Gavro A. Škrivanić (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga 1979), 11-14; on the other hand, there are more cautious and detailed analyses of Idrisi as a cartographer, see: Ahmad, S. Maqbul, "Cartography of al-Sharīf al-Idrīsī," in *The History of Cartography Vol. 2 Book 1: Cartography in the traditional Islamic and South Asian Societies*, ed. J.B. Harley, D. Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 156–174; Alexandru Madgearu, "Comentarii asupra unor informații din Geografia și Harta lui al-Idrīsī" [Commentaries on some informations from *Geography* of al-Idrīsī], *Pontica L* (2017): 138-140.

⁷ T. Lewicki. *Polska.*, 34-86; A. S. Maqbul, "Cartography," 168-170.

⁸ Enrico Cerulli, Alessio Bombaci, eds., *Al-Idrīsī, Opus geographicum: sive "Liber ad eorum delectationem qui terras peragrarare studeant."* 1970-1984 (Naples: Brill). (further Al-Idrīsī).

text with Polish translation and commentary.⁹ Over a century ago, Amédée Jaubert penned a translation of Idrisi's *Geography* into French based on two manuscripts kept in Paris.¹⁰ The Hungarian translation of the fragments related to medieval Hungary was provided by Istvan Elter,¹¹ while there are two Bulgarian editions – an older one by Boris Nedkov¹² and a newer one by Stoianka Kenderova and Boân Beševliev.¹³ With reference to certain areas of present-day Romania, Alexandru Madgearu provided an essential contribution on Idrisi.¹⁴

In Serbian scholarship, parts of Idrisi's *Geography* was published by Gavro Škrivanić – although this edition is incomplete and contains some errors, it is useful and provides a wealth of good data.¹⁵ More recently, Boris Stojkovski also investigated Idrisi, but this initial survey also had to be supplemented and some misconceptions corrected.¹⁶ Interestingly, an analysis of Idrisi's writings reveals that he was much more interested in *the other*, than his contemporary Abu-Hamid al-Garnati. Idrisi in his work describes cities, places, peoples, rivers, as well as economic and social circumstances, flora and fauna. At the time of his visit to Srem (or at least chronologically close to it), another Arab travel writer, the said Abu-Hamid al-Garnati, also travelled through Hungary. However, the latter, being a devout Muslim, concentrated on the Muslim population. Although he provided almost no information related to settlements in Hungary, he is a first-hand source regarding the Muslims with whom he

⁹ T. Lewicki, *Polska i sąsiednie w świetle "Księgi Rogera"* I [Poland and neighbouring countries in the light of Book of Roger] (Kraków: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1945); II (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1954).

¹⁰ P. Amédée Jaubert, trans. & ed. (1836–1840), *Géographie d'Édrisi traduite de l'arabe en français d'après deux manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du roi et accompagnée de notes* (2 Vols) (Paris: L'imprimerie Royale, 1836-1840). Along with a series of errors pertaining to the topic of this paper, the author mistakes Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár) with Belgrade, and Veliki Varadin (Nagyvárad, the present-day Oradea) with Petrovaradin.

¹¹ Elter, "Magyarország," 53-63.

¹² B. Nedkov, *Bŭlgarija*

¹³ Stojanka Kenderova, Bojan Beševliev, *Balkanskijat poluostrvo, izobražen v kartite na Al-Idrisi Paleografsko i istoriko-geografsko izsledvane* [The Balkan Peninsula, depicted in the maps of Al-Idrisi Paleographic and historical-geographical study] (Sofia: Nar. biblioteka "Kiril i Metodii," 1990)

¹⁴ A. Madgearu, "Commentarii," 137-159.

¹⁵ G. Škrivanić, "Idrisijeve podaci," 11-35.

¹⁶ Boris Stojkovski, "Arapski geograf Idrizi o Južnoj Ugarskoj i Srbiji [Arab geographer Idrizi about Southern Hungary and Serbia]," *Zbornik za istoriju Matice srpske* 79-80 (2009): 59-69.

lived, both in Srem and throughout the Hungarian kingdom. Thus, the two Arab authors complement each other.¹⁷

By using the aforementioned works, as well as others, a referenced selection of the data related to the territory of southern Hungary and Serbia in the period around 1154 is made here; in other words, this study focuses on the information provided by the Arab geographer al-Idrisi regarding the area of present-day Serbia. Serbia, also referred to as Macedonia by Idrisi (a term used for the entire area from Belgrade to Bulgaria), is described in the fourth section of the fifth climate, as well as in the third and fourth sections of the sixth climate. Part of the sixth climate and its third section also describe the Hungarian Kingdom and its southern settlements, which are now part of Serbia; these will also be discussed here. Climate sections V 4 and VI 4 describe both Bulgaria and Macedonia (Serbia), including cities south of the Sava and Danube, all the way south to Pirot. It should be noted that Idrisi is not entirely accurate, and because of the Arabic place names, which were not always translated consistently, it is challenging to identify the location of individual settlements. For this purpose, advanced studies in the refinement of individual toponyms have been used, namely the works of Jaubert, Nedkov, Lewicki, and Elter, since they all treat the territory examined here. However, when this was not possible, additional efforts were made based on geographical and historical data to determine the location of individual sites. Most of the locations have already been designated by earlier foreign authors, but accurate data was often missing, while in some instances, additional clarification of Idrisi's data was necessary. Since the general academic public has so far not had the opportunity to learn in English the information provided by the Arab geographer on medieval southern Hungary and Serbia (with certain exceptions), this study can provide useful information on how this region was seen and described by a representative of a different culture, who came from the European and Mediterranean capital of science of the time. Finally, it should be highlighted that this paper will not analyse Idrisi as a cartographer, nor will it analyse the data related to other parts

¹⁷ Boris Stojkovski, Nebojša Kartalija, "The Other and the Self in the travel accounts of Southern Hungary and Serbia in the works of Al-Idrīsī and Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġarnāṭī," *Romano-Arabica XVIII 2018, Geographies of Arab and Muslim Identity through the Eyes of Travelers*, 207-215.

of the world where he travelled, but exclusively the data on southern Hungary and Serbia.

The first data regarding the region is provided by the Arab geographer in the fourth section of the fifth climate. There are some valuable observations about the area of present-day south-eastern Serbia:

From '.t.r.l.s'¹⁸ (أتراليسة 'Atrālīsā – Sofia) to the town of '.t.r.b (أتروبي, Atrūbī – Pirot) there is a day of travel. The town is located on a mountain-top, from whence the river of M.r.f (مورافا Mūrāfā – Morava) flows.¹⁹

The Pirot region was part of Byzantium, and a trace of it was preserved in the later-named Galata-mahalla in Pirot. Moreover, and more significantly related to this subject, there are some clues regarding the existence of a fortification dating from the twelfth century. Archaeological data largely fill in the existing gaps regarding Pirot and the Pirot region in the Middle Ages.²⁰

From the aforementioned town of 'Atrūby and N.y.s.w (نيسو Nīsū – Niš) there is a day of travel. Nīsū is a city in the neighbourhood of a river, the aforementioned Mūrāfā. The river springs in the Serbian mountains.²¹

This informaton is followed by the data from the third and fourth sections of the sixth climate, which contain several relevant pieces of information related to this topic.

From the town of '.r.y.n.h (رينية Arīnīyah – Győr) to the town of B.k.š.n (بقصين Baqašin – Bač) southbound along the river

¹⁸ The reference first includes the transcription that can already be found in the literature, primarily with Lewicki, *Polska* and Elter, "Magyarország." Then it is followed by the form of the word or phrase observing the modern transcription rules, the Arabic name, and the modern name of the location.

¹⁹ Al-Idrīsī, 794.

²⁰ The word-form *Atrubi* most likely comes from *Turris*, meaning a tower which was located at the site of Pirot since the late ancient period; for more on Pirot during the Middle Ages and Idrisi's time, see Petar, "Ponišavlje u antičko doba [Valley of Nišava in ancient time]," *Pirotski zbornik* 8-9 (1979): 177-184; "Pirotski kraj u srednjem veku [Pirot region in the Middle ages]," *Pirotski zbornik* 8-9 (1979): 188-189; B. Nedkov, *Bulgarija*, 115.

²¹ Al-Idrīsī, 794-795. B. Nedkov, *Bulgarija*, 115-116. He believed that the form of the word *Niš* comes from the Greek declined word *Nίσου*.

D.n.w (دنو Danaw / Dunū – Danube) there are 60 miles. Baqašīn is a famous town, one of the largest towns. There are squares, merchants, artisans and learned Greek people علمع إغريقيون there. They have farms and arable land. Wheat, however, is very cheap because it is abundant.²²

This information coincides with that offered by the Byzantine writer John Kinnamos. He writes that Baqašīn is the most important city in Sirmium, being also the seat of the archbishops. The name *Baqašīn*, similar to the ancient Hungarian name of *Bagacsi*, is referred to as Παράλιτον by Kinnamos.²³ With respect to the church organization, it is a matter of disagreement in scholarship, further fuelled by the fact that Idrisi does not provide other information than that on learned Greeks or priests.²⁴ This paper will not provide further details about the origin and development of the Archdiocese of Kalocsa-Bacs, but it should be noted that, at that time, there was probably already an archdiocese with two seats, one in Kalocsa and the other one in Bač; however, there are also claims about the existence of an older archdiocese in Bač. At the time when Idrisi wrote his *Geography*, there is a record mentioning an archbishop named Miko (from 1156 to 1165), while the first record of an archbishop in Bač dates from 1134. Thus, undoubtedly, one can speak

²² Al-Idrīsī, 884.

²³ C.f. *Vizantijski izvori za istoriju naroda Jugoslavije IV* [Byzantine sources for the history of the people of Yugoslavia] (Belgrade: Vizantološki institut Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti, 1971), 70-71, (further referred to as VINJ); John Kinnamos, *The Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, trans. C.M. Brand (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 168; for the transfer or relics of Saint Procopius from Niš to Sirmium, as well as for the transfer of Syrmian bishopric from Sirmium to Bač see Vladislav Popović, “Kulturni kontinuitet i literarna tradicija u crkvi srednjovekovnog Sirmijuma” [Cult continuity and literary tradition in the church of medieval Sirmium], in *Sirmium-grad careva i mučenika (sabrani radovi o arheologiji i istoriji Sirmijuma)*, ed. Vladislav Popović (Sremska Mitrovica-Belgrade: Projekat Blago Sirmijuma: Arheološki institut, 2003), 168; 304; Boris Stojkovski, “Bač-središte sremske crkve?” [Bač-the centre of the Sirmium Church?], *Srpska teologija danas 2009. The Collection of papers from the first annual symposium held at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology on 29-30 May 2009*, ed. Bogoljub Šijaković (Belgrade: Institut za teološka istraživanja Pravoslavnog bogoslovskog fakulteta, 2010), 380-386.

²⁴ C.f. VINJ 70-71 where Jovanka Kalić (who also wrote a commentary of Kinnamos’ data in VINJ) puts forth her hypothesis as to which church had its seat in Bač: the Roman-Catholic one or the Greek one.

of a two-seat archdiocese in Idrisi's time, the older one in Kalocsa and the other in Bač.²⁵

However, the remark that the Greek scholars, whom Idrisi refers to as *ulamas*, live here, certainly indicates that this was also the seat of a Greek church. Therefore, Greek (Byzantine) priests were also present in the area. Another indication to support this claim is that when the Hungarians conquered and plundered Niš in 1071-1072, they took away the hand of Saint Procopius and brought it to Hungary. The hand was taken to Sirmium, the Church of Saint Demetrius, where it was located until 1164 when Manuel Komnenos returned it. At the same time, in 1071-1072, the Diocese of Sirmium was probably transferred to Bač, and was rebuilt by the Byzantines during the period when the Empire held Sirmium, between 1164-1180. This transfer of the diocese to Bač signifies the existence of a bishop, perhaps referred to as "the seat of the archbishops of these people" as mentioned by John Kinnamos, or perhaps being one of the *ulamas* who speak Greek, as Idrisi claims.²⁶ Idrisi's account of the city's grain and its wealth is also accepted by other historians, as well as by some other authors who researched Bač and its past.²⁷

From the town of Baqašin to the town of Kāw.n (قاون Qāūn – Kovin) there are 60 miles due east. Qāūn is a big, prosperous town on the river Danaw/Dunū, with squares and craft workshops. From the aforementioned town of 'k.r.h (أقرة - Aqrah – Jegar) to the town of Qāūn there are 160 miles.²⁸

²⁵ Attila Zsoldos, *Magyarország világi archontológiája* [The lay arhcontology of Hungary]. (Budapest: História-MTA Történettudományi intézete, 2011), 83 with additional references.

²⁶ Györfly does not question the existence of a Greek bishop either, see Györfly, György. *Az Árpád-kori Magyarorsyág történeti földrajza I.* [The historical geography of Hungary of the age of Árpáds] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1966), 212 (hereinafter *AMTF*). For more details see, B. Stojkovski, "Bač," 380-386. On the pillaging of Niš in the *Illuminated chronicle*, Latin edition *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum*, vol. I, ed. Emericus Szentpétery, (Budapest: Nap, 1999), 377; *The Illuminated Chronicle: Chronicle of the Deeds of the Hungarians from the Fourteenth century* ed. János M. Bak, László Veszprémy (Budapest-New York: Central European University Press; National Széchényi Library), 208-209.

²⁷ Györfly, *AMTF* I, 212; Miomir Petrović, "Srednjevekovna kula u Baču-Donžon [The medieval tower in Bač-Donjon]," *Rad vojvodanskih muzeja* 29 (1984-1985): 124.

²⁸ Al-Idrišī, 884-885. T. Lewicki. *Polska*, 129. Refers to Kovin as Kāūin.

Kovin is mentioned as early as 1072 as *urbs Keve* in the *Illuminated Chronicle*, as the place where the Danube was crossed. Kovin was also the seat of the county that covers much of today's Banat region. As Idrisi wrote about it 80 years after its first mention in other sources, when Kovin started to gain significance, his remarks about the town, including Bač somewhat earlier, are quite logical and correct.²⁹

From the town of 'f.r.n.k b.y.l.h (Francavilla, ap. Ifrankabilah-إفرانكيبلة – Mandelos) due north-east, there are 50 miles to the town of 'b.r.n.d.s (Abrandis-أبرندس – Petrovaradin, or the present-day Novi Sad). Abrandis is a civilized city with many squares and buildings. It is located beneath a hill, in a valley.³⁰

Francavilla, the Hungarian Nagyolasz, refers to today's village of Mandelos in Srem. This name, similar to the name of Fruška Gora, is a remnant of the Frankish administration of Srem from the time of Charlemagne.³¹ The town was also the location of the Holy Cross Monastery, and it was a place where, during the Middle Ages, inhabitants of Western (primarily French and Italian) descent settled.³²

²⁹ SRH I, 377; The *Illuminated Chronicle*, 210-211; Sima Ćirković, "Prilošci za istoriju Kovina u srednjem veku [Contributions to the history of Kovin in the Middle Ages]," *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju* 1 (1970): 83-86.; Dušanka Dinić-Knežević, "Slovenski živalj u urbanim naseljima srednjovekovne ugarske države" [Slavic population in the urban settlements of the medieval Hungarian state], *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju* 37 (1988): 25; Aleksandar Krstić, "Kovin," in *Leksikon gradova i trgova srednjovekovnih srpskih zemalja*, ed. Siniša Mišić (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2010), 131-134, the information on p. 131 is relevant for this topic, holding the most complete list of references about this issue.

³⁰ Al-Idrišī, 885. T. Lewicki, *Polska* 130, and Elter both use the name *Ibrandis*, with the exception that Elter places its location at Braničevo, Elter, "Magyarország," 59-60, Lewicki refers to Franca villa as Ifrankabilla with respect to this location.

³¹ VINJ IV, 119, c.f. footnote 14 at 118-119; Konstantin Jireček, "Hrišćanski elemenat u topografskoj nomenklaturi balkanskih zemalja" [The Christian element in the topographic nomenclature of the Balkan countries], *Zbornik Konstantina Jirečeka I*, ed. Mihailo Dinić (Belgrade: Naučno delo, 1959), 524-525; the name of Fruška Gora is of the same origin, Máttyás Gyóni, *Magyarország és a magyarország a bizánci források tükrében* [Hungary and Hungarians in the mirror of Byzantine sources] (Budapest: Pázmány Péter Tudományegyetem Görög Filozófiai Intézet, 1938), 109; Petar skok, "Toponomastika Vojvodine" [Toponymy of Vojvodina], *Vojvodina I*, ed. Dušan Popović (Novi Sad: Istorisko društvo, 1939), 118-119. Lewicki and Škrivanić erroneously identified as Sremska Mitrovica, T. Lewicki, *Polska*, II, 70-72; G. Škrivanić, *Idrisijevi podaci*, 15.

³² Stanko Andrić, "Samostan Svetoga Križa u Frankavili (Mandelosu)" [The Monastery of the Holy Cross in Francavilla (Mandelos)] *Istorijski časopis* LII (2005): 33-82.

As for the other city, Abrandis, we can safely assume that it is not Braničevo, as Istvan Elter claims. Although he likely took this theory from earlier historiography, first and foremost from Tadeusz Lewicki, he surely cannot be referring to Braničevo, which also appears further on in Idrisi's work under a different name, as will be seen later. It is also worth noting that Braničevo is not located in the northeast of Mandelos, i.e., area of Srem, but in the south-east. A further theory was put forth that Idrisi might have referred to Banoštor, i.e. Petrik.³³ Ban Belos owned this property in Idrisi's time, where he built a Benedictine monastery that would become wealthy and famous during the Middle Ages and eventually the seat of the Diocese of Srem.³⁴ Furthermore, sources reveal that the Byzantine Emperor Manuel I Komnenos, in the campaign to Hungary in 1164, was opposite Titel, which in fact refers to Petrik, i.e. Banoštor, or Hungarian Kő, which is the origin of the medieval name of this place.³⁵

Distance may be problematic here, as Idrisi states that there are 50 miles between Mandelos, or Francovilla, and Abrandis, whose location we are trying to identify. Perhaps, because of this and the shape of the place, this town should be identified with Varadin or Petrovaradin, which is the modern-day Novi Sad, on the left bank of the Danube, as opposed to Banoštor. The word *Ibrandis* (Abrandis with Lewicki), as used by Idrisi, could be similar to Varadinus, Petrovaradinus, Peturvarad, Waradinum Petri, as well as to the adjective *Waradiensis* (of Varadin, belonging to Varadin) and similar forms encountered in the sources. Of course, all of this is adapted to Arabic pronunciation, where "v" becomes "b."³⁶

Identifying Bovi Sad would be essential because it would enrich the history of the city by deeming it a significant hub of the time. Furthermore, it would be the first mention of Novi Sad as a well-organized and wealthy city, which coincides with contemporary and somewhat later sources. The fact that it is located below a hill can easily point to Fruška Gora. The letter from Pope Honorius III to the Byzantine Empress Margarita, the widow of Isaac II Angelos, refers to

³³ Stojkovski, "Arapski geograf Idrizi," 64, footnote 13.

³⁴ Jovanka Kalić, "Raški veliki župan Uroš II" [Grand Prince of Raška Uroš II], *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 12 (1970): 24; eadem, "Župan Beloš" [Prince Beloš], *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 36 (1997), 78.

³⁵ VINJ IV, 68-69, c.f. footnote 169; John Kinnamos, *Deeds*, 164-165.

³⁶ Györfly, *AMTF II*, 230

Varod as one of the possessions she received from her brother Andrew II, King of Hungary. This letter, from 30 March 1223, as well as a charter by Béla IV, confirm the existence of Petrovaradin or Varadin on the left bank of the Danube, on the site of present-day Novi Sad.³⁷ It came into Margarita's possession after 1213, when it was confiscated from Ban Peter, after whom Petrovaradin was named. The charter also mentions the existence of a palace, which probably belonged to Ban Peter. Idrisi states that the location includes many squares and buildings, and reveals that the citizens of Petrovaradin and the whole surrounding area came by ferry to Stari Petrovaradin, i.e. present-day Novi Sad. Although this later information dates from a later period, the existence of the palace and the folk tradition, along with the name of the place, Vasáros-Várad, indicate that trade seems to have been developed in Idrisi's time. One document indicates that there was a ferry on both river banks as early as 1267 and that Varad, i.e. Peturvarad, was a storage facility where the serfs of Bačka brought their duties, they were due to pay in agricultural products.³⁸

Based on the information above, one can hypothesise, but not conclude with certainty, that in Idrisi's time, Novi Sad was a town which included a mayor's palace (which would later be known as Peter's palace), a ferry, as well as squares frequented by people from the surrounding areas. Considering that present-day Novi Sad was inhabited by Hungarians since its settlement, and before 895 by other populations, it is relatively safe to assume that Idrisi is referring here referring to Varadin, i.e. Novi Sad.³⁹ This way, just like for Bač, the work of the Arab

³⁷ Melhior Erdujhelji, *Istorija Novog Sada* [The History of Novi Sad] (Novi Sad: Izdalo opštinstvo slob. kr. varoši Novoga Sada, 1894), 44-46; Peter Rokai, "Iz srednjovekovne istorije Novog Sada," [From medieval history of Novi Sad] *Zbornik za istoriju Matice Srpske* 11 (1975): 107-108, c.f. footnotes 15-25 with an extensive, somewhat earlier Hungarian bibliography and sources. The data from Peter Rokai and the Hungarian historians he refers to provide an even stronger basis for our assumption that Abrandis is Petrovaradin, i.e. present-day Novi Sad.

³⁸ Several Hungarian charters confirm the existence of Petrovaradin (present-day Novi Sad) see Gusztav Wenzel, *Árpádkori új okmánytár. Codex diplomaticus Arpadianus continuatus. VII. 1235-1260* (Budapest: MTA történelmi bizottmánya, 1860), 27-31; Augustin Theiner, *Vetera monumenta historica Hungariorum sacra illustrantia*, Vol. 1 (Rome: Typis Vaticanis, 1859), 39; István Gyárfás, *A jász-kunok története II. kötet* [The History of Jas and Cumans] (Kecskemét: s. p, 1873), 420-421.

³⁹ Erdujhelji, *Istorija Novog Sada*, 1-36.

geographer significantly supplements the history of these places in the twelfth century.

Continuing his description of present-day Vojvodina, while traveling through it, Idrisi states:

From thence, by the river Danaw to the town of Qāūn there are 70 miles. Similarly, from the town of Abrandis to the town of Baqašīn there are also 70 miles. Baqašīn is west from Qāūn. Baqašīn and Qāūn are two famous towns, both with numerous inhabitants and plenty of traffic going in and out of them (both are busy towns).⁴⁰ To turn back to the aforementioned, it was said that from the town of B.d.wār.h (بوارق Budawārah – Buda) to the town of T.y.t.l.w.s⁴¹ (تیتلو Tīt(a)lūs, Titel), by riverway due east there are 75 miles.⁴²

Titel dates from the eleventh century. From start, it was more significant than all of the other settlements at the confluence of the rivers Tisa and Danube. Its chapter of the canonical order of Saint Augustine and the monastery was of particular importance. The Titel chapter was also a site of the “public faith,” and as such, it undoubtedly had great importance because only the cathedral chapters and larger collegiate chapters had this right. Additionally, the chapter itself was dedicated to Saint Sophia, which is a unique case in medieval Hungary.⁴³

⁴⁰ Al-Idrīsī, 885.

⁴¹ This is the transcription according to Tadeusz Lewicki, T. Lewicki, *Polska*, 131.

⁴² Al-Idrīsī, 885. This is certainly south-east, since Titel is not located to the south of Buda, whereas the riverway most likely refers to the Danube.

⁴³ Ede Ivánfi, *Titel mint prépostság, káptalan, bíteles hely és vár* [Titel as provost, chapter, place of authentication and fortress] (Temesvár: s. p, 1877); Menyhért Érdujhelyi, “A titeli káptalan története” [History of the chapter in Titel], *A Bács-Bodrogh vármegyei történelmi társulat évkönyve* 11 (1895): 49-85; *ibid*, *A kalocsai érsekség a renaissance korban*. [The archbishopric of Kalocsa in the age of renaissance] (Zenta: s. p, 1899), 157; D. Dinčić-Knežević, *Slovenski živalj*, 35; Petar Rokai, Zoltan Đere, Tibor Pal, Aleksandar Kasaš, *Istorija Madara* [History of the Hungarians] (Belgrade: CLIO, 2002), 33-34; Gábor Thoroczky, “A Szent Bölcsesség egyháza, A titeli társaskáptalan története a kezdetektől a XIV. század közepéig” [The Church of Saint Sophia. A history of chapter in Titel from the beginnings to the mid-14th century], *Fons* 21 (2014): 331-350; Boris Stojkovski, “Pravoslavlje u Bačkoj u srednjem veku. Nekoliko priloga” [Orthodoxy in Bačka in the Middle Ages. A few contributions], in *Eparhija bačka kroz vekove*, eds. Brane Milovac, Predrag M. Vajagić (Bačka Palanka: Srpska Pravoslavna crkvena opština: Društvo nastavnika istorije Bačke Palanke, 2018), 238–240. *Idem*, “Vizantijski manastiri u srednjovekovnoj Ugarskoj [Byzantine monasteries in medieval Hungary].” in *Pravoslavno*

We have already mentioned that from the town of Tītlūs to the town of Ifrankabīlah due south there are (missing data) miles. From the town of Ifrankabīlah to the town of Qāūn there are 100 miles. From the town of Ifrankabīlah to the town of Abrandis there are 50 miles. From the town of Abrandis to the town of Bān.y.h (بانية Bānīah) located on the river L.y.n.h (لينة Līnāh) there are 75 miles. It is small, but it has town districts and fortifications on the river bank. The river debouches between Qāūn and B.l.g.r.d.w.n (بلغردون Bālgrādūn – Belgrade).⁴⁴

Līnāh Elter identified this river as the Lim. We know that the Lim does not flow into the Danube, so it may in fact be the river Mlava, or even Jezava or some other smaller river. The town of Vānīah could perhaps be identified as Pančevo. However, later on, al-Idrisi states that it takes five days to travel from this town to Belgrade, which would exclude the possibility that he would even Pančevo in his work. Tadeusz Lewicki, and via him Gavro Škrivanić, believed that this was Pribojska Banja, but it is unclear what sources they used.⁴⁵ The fact is that there are several older buildings in the complex of the Monastery of Saint Nicholas in Banja near Priboj on the Lim, a temple that has been the seat of the Diocese of Dabar since 1219. However, the lack of written sources does not lend us the right to quickly reach a conclusion.⁴⁶ In addition, if this

monaštvo. Tematski zbornik posvećen arhimandritu Dionisiju (Panteliću), duhovniku manastira Svetog Stjepana u Ljpcovu, povodom sedam decenija njegove monaške službe [Orthodox monasticism. Collected papers dedicated to hegoumenos Dyonisios (Panteliá) on the occasion of seven decades of his monastic service], ed. Dragiša Bojović (Niš: Centar za crkvene studije, 2019), 135-136.

⁴⁴ Al-Idrīsī, 887.

⁴⁵ T. Lewicki, *Polska*, II, 145-146; G. Škrivanić, *Idrisijevi podaci*, 15.

⁴⁶ It appears that the first to point to the possibility that this is Banja was Konstantin Jireček, see Konstantin Jireček, “Trgovački putevi i rudnici Srbije i Bosne u srednjem vijeku” [Trade routes and mines of Serbia and Bosnia in the Middle Ages], in *Zbornik Konstantina Jirečeka I* [Works of Konstantin Jireček volume I], ed. Mihailo Dinić (Belgrade: Naučno delo, 1959), 246, but he did not specify where in the sources he found this interpretation; for more on archaeological studies, c.f. Mirjana Šakota, “Prilozi poznavanju manastira Banje kod Priboja” [Contributions to the knowledge of the monastery of Banja near Priboj], *Saopštenja* 19 (1970), 19-46; Marija Janković, *Episkopije i mitropolije srpske crkve u srednjem veku* [Episcopates and metropolitanates of the Serbian church in the Middle Ages] (Belgrade: Istorijski institut: Narodna knjiga 1985), 175-177; Marina Bunardžić, “Manastir Svetog Nikole u Dabru-arheološka istraživanja trema”

were accepted as Pribojska Banja, the question of the river would still remain because the Lim is far from the Danube and does not debouch anywhere between Kovin and Belgrade.

Bānīah is thus likely to remain entirely unknown, as is the river, since the Arab geographer does not provide more information on their possible location. It could possibly be Ram, which was mentioned in 1128 as a place in which the Byzantines defeated the Hungarians, so it did exist two decades later, when Idrisi could have visited it. Ram, or Horom, or Hram is also mentioned in 1161 in connection with the conquering plans of the Emperor Manuel I Komnenos – thus, it coincides chronologically and to some extent geographically. Since the town is also referred to in different sources as Borona, Brana, Vrana, it is not impossible that Hram/Horom be the closest possible determination of Idrisi's unknown toponym. The problem is that there are no written sources on Hram/Horom. It may be assumed that this were Kulič, or another town located on a smaller river, a tributary of the Danube, so that they are somewhat geographically close, but it is almost impossible to find any similarity to the names that Idrisi uses. However, the fact that the river flows into the Danube between Belgrade and Kovin reduces the possible choices to Kulič, or even to Smederevo, but it is still almost impossible to link the names, so perhaps these assumptions should already be rejected. As he later refers to a five-day journey, and a two-day journey from Kovin to Belgrade, it can be assumed that this is a town in today's central Serbia, perhaps in the Morava basin, which might be the most accurate solution, if we look at how Idrisi described the regions he travelled through. In this case, however, the location identified as Petrovaradin would be wrong, and we would return to Istvan Elter's basic idea that Abrandis refers to Braničevo. But the fact that there are more than 50 miles from Braničevo to Mandelos, makes the problem of the identification of the town and river even more complicated. This was probably an error made by Idrisi when he wrote his *Geography*, especially since the next town he mentions is Plana, stating it is 90 miles away, while Plana is a mining settlement near Kopaonik.⁴⁷

[Monastery of Saint Nicholas in Dabar-archeological excavations of porch], *Saopštenja* 41 (2009): 265-278.

⁴⁷ With respect to Ram, see Mladan Cunjak, *Ram i ramska tvrđava kroz vekove* [Ram and Ram Fortress through the centuries] (Požarevac-Smederevo: Narodni muzej; Regionalni zavod za zaštitu spomenika kulture, 2008), 37-39; c.f. also Aleksandar Deroko,

Of course, there may nevertheless still exist an extinct or unidentified fortress near or on the Lim River. However, the lack of both archaeological and written sources does not allow us to make safe assumptions. The Kovin Fort was located on the Lim River, but it is uncertain if it was built before the fifteenth century.⁴⁸ In the end, almost no assumption can quite fit this issue, leaving the question open. Idrisi later mentions Bānīah in several places, indicating that this is more likely present-day central or southwestern Serbia, than a particular town on a river that flows into the Danube or that is located next to such a river.

From the town of Bānīah to the town of 'blān.h (أبلانية) 'Ablānah – Plana) there are 90 miles. This is a prosperous town.⁴⁹

As far as Plana is concerned, it was the place of an advanced mining region in the late Middle Ages where the Ragusan consuls were located. Although the first record of Plana in the Dubrovnik Archives dates to the fourteenth century, archaeological traces point to one century earlier, when mining thrived. Therefore, a town may have been located in the region even before the thirteenth century, which would continue to develop into one of the most important mining areas until the fall of the Despotate.⁵⁰

The distance between the town of 'Ablānah to the town of Rabnah is 120 miles. Rabnha is a large and prosperous town.⁵¹

Ravno, today's Čuprija, is the ancient Horreum Margi. This city was located on an important route from the Roman times and was also mentioned by numerous Latin European writers, especially historians of the Crusades. Interestingly, Idrisi contradicts one of them, Arnold of

Srednjovekovni gradovi na Dunavu [Medieval cities on the Danube] (Belgrade: Turisticka štampa, 1964), 23.

⁴⁸ With respect to Kovin on the Lim, c.f. A. Krstić, "Kovin", 130-131.

⁴⁹ Al-Idrīsī, 887. T. Lewicki. *Polska*, 133 cites the form Iblāna.

⁵⁰ Vasilije Simić, "Plana. Srednjovekovno naselje rudarske privrede" [Plana. Medieval settlement of the mining economy], *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta Srpske akademije nauka* 4-6 (1955-1957): 105-122.; Snežana Božanić, "Rudarstvo u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji i Bosni." [Mining in medieval Serbia and Bosnia], *Spomenica Istorijskog arhiva Srem* 1 (2002), 91; Sima Ćirković, Desanka Kovačević-Kojić, Ruža Ćuk, *Staro srpsko rudarstvo* [Old Serbian mining] (Belgrade-Novı Sad: Vukova zadužbina: Prometej, 2002), 37-38; Aleksandra Fostikov, "Plana," *Leksikon gradova i trgova*, 214-215.

⁵¹ Al-Idrīsī, 887.

Lübeck, who described the Serbs as savages who did not like foreigners. The most likely reason for Arnold's description is the Serbian attack on the Crusaders in 1172 at Ravno. In Idrisi's time however, Ravno is a town that was already developed and well-known, and which had great strategic importance.⁵²

There is a four-day journey from the town of Rabnah due south to the town of Gān.l (غابل Gānal/ Gānul Konavlje). This town was occupied and ravaged by the Venetians. The town is located on a large river, on which the city of Nīsū is also located. The distance between the two towns is crossed by land in four days, whereas it takes only two days to cross it by river.⁵³

It has been assumed earlier by Boris Nedkov that this passage refers to Konavle, although it may also refer to Hum, as was suggested by earlier editors of Idrisi's work both Boris Nedkov and Jaubert. Konavlje is located by the sea, and is much further away than the four-day journey Idrisi suggested. At the time when Idrisi described these areas, Konavle was, along with the entire Hum region, under the authority of župan Desa, which was preceded by a long period under the strong influence of the Byzantine Empire, so that in the ninth century the inhabitants of Konavle participated in the defence of Bari against the Arabs. What is further confusing is the fact that Niš and Konavlje are not on the same river. Therefore, the information must be erroneous. The question of which Venetian devastation al-Idrisi's refers to also remains open.⁵⁴

The distance between Nīsū and Rabnah is 50 miles. The distance between Bānīah and the town of Bālgradūn due north is five days by land, and between Bānīah and the town of Qāūn is 100 miles. The distance from Qāūn to Bālgradūn is 70 miles, or good two days by foot, whereas it takes less

⁵² Aleksandar Uzelac, "Ravno," *Leksikon gradova i trgova*, 234-235; idem, *Krstaši i Srbi* [Crusaders and Serbs] (Belgrade: Utopija, 2018), 125-126, 129-131, 139, 144, 159-160, 180 with detailed references of Western authors on Ravno.

⁵³ Al-Idrīsī, 887.

⁵⁴ C.f. B. Nedkov, *Būlgarija*, 111-112. c.f. Radoslav M. Grujić, *Konavli pod raznim gospodarima od XII do XV veka* [Konavle under various lords from the 12th to the 15th century] (Zemun: Makarije, 1926), 3-5. Jaubert even thought that this referred to Novi, Jaubert, *Géographie*, 379, but this fortress is known to have been built later.

by river. Bālgradūn is a prosperous town, with numerous inhabitants and beautiful temples.⁵⁵

Belgrade was an important trading centre throughout the Middle Ages, and the Byzantine and Hungarian conflicts over Belgrade were in progress during Idrisi's time. Byzantine historian John Kinnamos provides detailed records of the fight over Belgrade, the city that had a key strategic point in these conflicts. However, it is unclear to which temples Idrisi refers.⁵⁶

The distance from here to 'f.r.n.y.s.fā (أفرانيسفا 'Afranīsfa – Braničevo) is 75 miles, two days by river. 'Afranīsfa is a large and prosperous town. The distance between Bālgradūn and Rabnah is 150 miles through the plains, between Rabnah and 'Afranīsfa there are good two days by foot, or, as stated earlier, 100 miles. This is a prosperous town in the plains. It is busy, the goods are cheap, fruit is always available, there is plenty of water supply from the river, it is located in a spacious flatland. Its commerce is ongoing, and there is opulence throughout. It is one of the towns of M.k.d.w.n.y.h (مقدونية Maq(a)dūniāh – Serbia).⁵⁷

Hungary seemed to have a larger trade colony in Braničevo, a city where border trade flourished. Hungarian merchants even went to Constantinople via Braničevo also selling their goods there. The importance of Braničevo was further confirmed by the fact that the Byzantine attack on it in the late 1120s was the catalyst for the war

⁵⁵ Al-Idrīsī, 887.

⁵⁶ see Kalić Jovanka, "Beograd u međunarodnoj trgovini srednjeg veka [Belgrade in the international trade of the Middle Ages]," in *Zbornik radova SANU, Oslobođenje gradova u Srbiji od Turaka 1862-1867*, ed. Vasa Čubrilović (Belgrade: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, Odeljenje društvenih nauka, 1970.) 47-60; VINJ IV, 39-55; John Kinnamos, *Deeds*, 18, 104-105, 162, 181; as well as Jovanka Kalić, *Beograd u srednjem veku* [Belgrade in the Middle Ages] (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1967), 47-50.

⁵⁷ Al-Idrīsī, 888. B. Nedkov, *Būlgarija*, 116 has a point in concluding that the Arabic version of Braničevo has a Byzantine source, originating from Greek and Byzantine sources which use the term Βρανεσιον; more specifically, the name is also used by Idrisi's contemporaries, John Kinnamos and Nicetas Choniates (VINJ IV, 13, 16, 43, 47, 48, 50, 61, 117, 129, 131, 137, 151—153); John Kinnamos, *Deeds*, 19, 93, 100, 103; *City of Byzantium. Annals of Niketa Choniates*, transl. Harry Magoulias (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), 11, 72, 77, 149, 154-155. Lewicki proposes the form *Ifranīsufā*. T. Lewicki, *Polska*, 134.

between Byzantium and Hungary at the beginning of the reign of Stephen II (1116-1131).⁵⁸ At the time of the Second Crusade, the Crusaders also passed through Braničevo, but, unlike Idrisi, having visited it earlier, in 1147, they considered the city poor.⁵⁹

The distance between here and Nīsū is 50 miles. Nīsū is one of the cities of Maq(d)ūnīah. Other parts of the country of Maq(a)dūnīah will be described if God gives us strength. From Qāūn to the country of 'n.k.r.y.h (أنكرية) Ankrīa/Unkarīa – Hungary) the road leads north.⁶⁰ Due south, after eight days of travel by foot, the river Danaw flows between the towns of Baqaṣīn and Qāūn. The distance between Qāūn and the town of Š.n.t (شنت) Šanat – Cenad) is four days, it is west of the river. It is prosperous, charming and civilized. One of the towns in Maq(a)dūnīah is Nīsū. It is famous. There are plenty of fish, honey, milk at low prices. There is also plenty of fruit. It sits on top of a hill and next to the river Mūrāfā which flows from the Serbian mountains. There is also a large bridge across the Mūrāfā, which serves as an entry point to the city.⁶¹

Niš had been a rich city even before Idrisi wrote about it. Many merchants gathered there, and luxury ceramics found there confirm this thesis.⁶² During the war between Hungary and Byzantium in 1071-1072, when the hand of Saint Procopius was taken away, the citizens of Niš gave bounteous gold, silver, and other precious gifts to the Hungarian King Solomon, a fact also confirmed by *Illuminated Chronicle*. Niš was, at Idrisi's time, a wealthy city of great strategic importance. It was also along the route of the Crusaders, who stopped for supplies here, as this was the only city where they could get enough food during the Second

⁵⁸ *Istorija Madara*, 48-49.

⁵⁹ Mihailo Dinić, *Braničevo u srednjem veku* [Braničevo in the Middle Ages] (Požarevac: Narodni univerzitet, 1958), 12; J. Kalić, *Beograd u srednjem veku*, 44, also c.f. footnote 41 on p. 350 for further bibliographical references.

⁶⁰ Idrisi further in the text describes parts of Hungary which are not the focus of this paper, and, at the end of the paragraph, returns to the area described here. Al-Idrīsī, 888.

⁶¹ Al-Idrīsī, 888.

⁶² Marija Bajalović-Hadži-Pešić, "Nalazi vizantijske keramike XI-XIII veka na području Srbije" [Finds of Byzantine ceramics of the XI-XIII century on the territory of Serbia], *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 36 (1997), 147.

Crusade. Even the Emperor Manuel I Komnenos stayed in Niš around the time when Idrisi travelled and compiled his *Geography*; in 1150, he commanded the war with the Serbs and the Hungarians from Niš.⁶³

The distance between Nīsū and Atrübī is 40 miles. Atrübī is located on a small river, which springs from the Serbian mountains (جبال صربية), flows by Atrübī in the east and into the river Mūrāfā, thus joining together into a large river. After this, the river flows on, until it joins with the Danaw/Dunū, in the vicinity of 'Afranīsfā. There are numerous watermills, gardens and vineyards along the river (Morava). The distance between Atrübī and 'Atrālīsā mentioned in the fifth section (climate) is 40 miles.⁶⁴

There is a day's journey between Nīsū and رابنه) Rabnah – Ravno). Between Rabnah (Ravno) and 'Afranīsfā there is a day and a half of journey. 'Afranīsfā has many inhabitants and is located in the mountains overlooking the river Danaw/Dunū – Danube.⁶⁵

Braničevo, alongside Belgrade, as the most important fortress on the Danube and Byzantium's stronghold against Hungary, was the location of numerous battles and a place of great strategic importance. Interestingly, at the time when Idrisi wrote his *Geography* (around 1154),

⁶³ With respect to the sources on Niš c.f. SRH I, 377; *The Illuminated Chronicle*, 208-209; Jovanka Kalić, "Niš u srednjem veku [Niš in the Middle Ages]," *Istorijski časopis* 31 (1984): 10-21, with respect to Niš and its role in the eleventh and twelfth century politics, see Boris Stojkovski, "Niš u vizantijsko-ugarskim odnosima u XI i XII veku" [Niš in Byzantine-Hungarian relations in the 11th and 12th centuries], in *Niš i Vizantija* 7, ed. Miša Rakocija (Niš: Grad Niš: Univerzitet: Niški kulturni centar, 2009), 383-394.; for more on Niš during the Crusades see in detail with numerous references A. Uzelać, *Krstaši*, 11, 14, 29, 32-33, 41- 44, 52, 55-57, 59-61, 66, 93, 104, 108, 117-118, 126, 128-129, 131- 133, 135-138, 143, 145, 151,157, 160-162, 165-170, 172-173, 180- 181.

⁶⁴ Al-Idrīsī, 893, clearly provides relative reliable data here, since the Nišava does in fact merge with the South Morava, which in turn merges at Stalać with the West Morava and together make the Great Morava, which indeed, as it is well-known, merges with the Danube not far from Braničevo. Dragan Rodić, Mila Pavlović, *Geografija Jugoslavije I* [Geography of Yugoslavia I] (Belgrade: Savremena administracija, 1994), 144-145.

⁶⁵ Al-Idrīsī, 795 and 894, in a somewhat abridged version which does not include references to distances. T. Lewicki, *Polska*, 129. *Dunū* is quite possibly a more accurate form of the word.

the Hungarian siege of Braničevo was underway, taking place probably at the end of 1154.⁶⁶

There is a two-and-a-half-day journey from 'Afranīsfā, along the river Danaw/ Dunū to the town of N.k.s.trū (نوڪسترو Nūkastrū – Novigrad). The town of Nūkastrū is located on a hill, next to the Danube, which flows here from the south. The mouth of the Morava is also in its vicinity. It is a nice, cheap town, with finely kept farms, and numerous vineyards.⁶⁷

It is very likely that this is the former Novigrad, and not Kladovo, as it was erroneously claimed by Boris Nedkov.⁶⁸ Apparently, Idrisi also heard the word-form *Novicastrum*, or something similar. Kladovo was built by the Turks in 1524, but some scholars believe it was erected before that, as there is information about King Sigmund's visit to the town in 1419. There are also foundations of an even older town, which Aleksandar Deroko, a Serbian and Yugoslav architectural historian, believes date back to Sigmund's time. Therefore, Kladovo can be dismissed with considerable certainty for the period when Idrisi mentions it as a solution for the ubication in *The Book of Roger*. It is, however, very likely that this was a site near Čezava, identified as *Castrum Novae*, a late antique and early Byzantine site located 18 km downstream of Golubac. It may be assumed that this was the town that Idrisi visited and that survived until a later period.⁶⁹ Here, however, the lack of other written sources does not give much room for new assumptions, but the relatively precise ubication by Idrisi, as well as the Latinized name of the place he mentioned, allows us to assume that it was Novigrad, i.e. Čezava.

This exhausts the information that al-Idrisi wrote in his *Geography* regarding southern Hungary and Serbia of his time, that is, the entire

⁶⁶ Ferenc Makk, "Contribution à la chronologie des conflits hungaro-byzantines," *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 20 (1981): 31-33; J. Kalić, "Niš u srednjem veku," 19-20.

⁶⁷ Al-Idrīsī, 896-897.

⁶⁸ Б. В. Недков, *България*, 69, 79, 133. He was at first correct in identifying it as Novigrad; however, he referred to older references and accepted the incorrect conclusion that this is Kladovo.

⁶⁹ A. Deroko, *Srednjovekovni gradovi*, 25; for more on Novigrad see Miloje Vasić, "Čezava-Castrum Novae," *Starinar* 33-34 (1982-1983): 92-121., 92-121; *Arheološko blago Đerdapa* [Archaeological treasure of Đerdap], ed. by Gordana Marjanović-Vujović et al. (Belgrade: Narodni muzej, 1978), 83.

territory of present-day Serbia. Idrisi's data are valuable albeit not always precise and accurate, but they are an important historical source that in some cases complements known data. At times, one might even say that he provides the first or even the only written source for some places, while other times his writings are difficult to comprehend and cannot be used in research. Certainly, Idrisi's information on southern Hungary and Serbia merits an analysis from a geographical point of view, and his journey through these areas is a rare and, therefore, worthwhile case of a famous Arab author leaving behind a wealth of information about present-day Serbia.

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