

## **HADD: A TECHNICAL TERM IN ARABIC WORKS ON GEOGRAPHY**

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The Arabic word *ḥadd* (pl. *ḥudūd*) plays an important role in texts on the early history of the Magyars and related subjects from the field of geography and history. Its meaning is “border”, which nowadays is normally conceived of as a *line*. However, this meaning is not always accurate, because the texts in question often discuss *areas* with a certain extent, describing formations and events located or taking place *in* them. This is indicated by the frequent occurrence of the preposition *fī* “in” in connection with this word, e.g., “*wa-ṣ-ṣaqāliba fī awā’il ḥaddihā madīna tusammā wāxīx* / in the first borders of the Slavs [=in the nearer parts of their border region] there is a town called *Wāxīx*”.<sup>1</sup> Modern scholars are often at a loss as to the precise interpretation of this term. For instance, the first publisher of the text, Khvolson, translated this sentence in 1869 as follows: “*V bližnikh krayakh zemli Slavyanskoy nakhoditsya gorod po imeni Va-i*-. In the nearer regions of the Country of the Slavs there is a city called Va-i-.”<sup>2</sup> Gaston Wiet’s translation (1955) runs: “*La première ville qu’on rencontre aussitôt après la frontière se nomme Wabnit*. / The first city which one encounters right after the border is called Wabnit.”<sup>3</sup> At the beginning of the Magyar chapter we come across the expression: “*awwal ḥadd min ḥudūd al-Maġġariyya* / the first border from among the borders of the Magyars”, that is “the first of the Magyars’ border areas”, the one nearest to the author.<sup>4</sup> In Khvolson’s translation: “*perviy iz krayev Mad’yarskikh* / the first one from among the Magyar regions”. On his part, Gaston Wiet simply skips this problematic expression: “*la frontière des Magyars* / the border of the Magyars”.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Rusta, *A’lāq*, 143<sup>7-8</sup>. The sign *x* indicates an unidentified letter. The city remains unidentified, too.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Dasta, *Izvestiya*, 28.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Rusteh, *Atours*, 161.

<sup>4</sup> Ibn Rusta, *A’lāq*, 142<sup>6-7</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibn Dasta, *Izvestiya*, 25. Ibn Rusteh, *Atours*, 160.

We shall now make an attempt to clarify this situation.<sup>6</sup> The original meaning of the root  $\sqrt{HDD}$  is “to be sharp” in the Semitic languages, with occurrences in Akkadian, Arabic, Ethiopic (Geez) and Hebrew.<sup>7</sup> The basic verb belonging to this root in Arabic is *ḥadda* / *yaḥiddu* / *ḥiddat*<sup>am</sup> “to be sharp”.<sup>8</sup> All the other meanings connected to this root, the corresponding verb and nouns can be deduced from this form: “to be sharp” metaphorically (in respect of eloquence / intellect / understanding / anger; “look sharply”), “separate” / “distinguish” / “define”, “prevent” / “forbid” / “withhold”, “sharpen”. The noun *ḥadd* (pl. *ḥudūd*) as listed by Arab lexicographers is closely related to this verb semantically: it means “limit or boundary of a land or territory”.<sup>9</sup>

In modern Europe and in many other regions of the world a border constitutes a sharp division between two areas, and it appears accordingly as a sharp, clear-cut line in modern maps. In earlier periods, however, borders were, and in many cases still are, *strips* of land of sometimes considerable width, even large areas. At times borders were not constant but fluctuated, with the continuously changing military situation for instance, as was the case between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Ottoman Empire in the 16th–17th centuries. Availing myself of modern tools, which were not available to our predecessors, I have searched a large corpus of Arabic texts with the help of the website *al-Warrāq* and my findings fully corroborate these assumptions.<sup>10</sup> When the emphasis is on the demarcation of two territories, it is appropriate to translate this word as “border”, which is now mostly interpreted as a *line*. However, when the emphasis is on something lying *within* the adjoining area, it is preferable to use “border area” in translation.

We should not fail to mention here that Lane’s *Lexicon* lists a meaning “a side, region, quarter, or tract” in the entry on *ḥadd* on the authority of the *Lisān al-‘arab*.<sup>11</sup>

If we look further and consider other languages too, we find a similar situation. For instance, the Modern English “border” can also denote the *land* near the *line* in question: “the line that divides two countries or areas; the land near this line”;<sup>12</sup> “a region lying along the edge of a country or territory; frontier country”.<sup>13</sup> Hungarian *határ* “border” also possesses the meaning “area around a settlement”, e.g., *kint jár a*

<sup>6</sup> I have treated this subject briefly elsewhere (Ormos, 2021:37–38) but it seems to deserve a more detailed analysis, which is attempted in these pages.

<sup>7</sup> Castell 1669:1128–1131. Gesenius 1987–2012: II (1995), 325.

<sup>8</sup> Lane 1980:524c.

<sup>9</sup> Lane 1980:525b.

<sup>10</sup> The website *al-Warrāq* (*alwaraq.net*) was very easy to use when I did my research for this paper. It has been completely “modernized” since then, with sadly disappointing results.

<sup>11</sup> Lane 1980:525b, bottom. Ibn Manẓūr, the author of the *Lisān*, died in AD 1312.

<sup>12</sup> Hornby 2005:168.

<sup>13</sup> Webster 1976:255b.

*határban* “he is out in the fields”, a *határban a halál kaszál* “death is reaping in the fields”.<sup>14</sup>

Hungarian *megye* “county; administrative district” is a similar case; it is a South-Slavic loanword, cf. Modern Serbian/Croatian *međa* “border”, “ridge [between two fields]”.<sup>15</sup> The early Hungarians borrowed it from the Slavic inhabitants of the area sometime after they conquered the Carpathian Basin towards the end of the ninth century AD. The semantic development of this word was “border” > “border area” > “area (in general)” > “administrative district”. This can be demonstrated in Hungarian: at its first occurrence in 1055 it meant “border”, while by c. 1116 it had occurred with the meaning “county; administrative district”.<sup>16</sup> A word of the same origin entered Hungarian from Old Slovenian or Old Bulgarian, too: *mežda* “centre”, “border” became *mezsgye* “border” in Hungarian.<sup>17</sup> The Modern Russian preposition *meždu* “between”, itself a borrowing from Old Church Slavonic replacing the regular Old Russian *mežu*, also belongs here; it is a locative dual of Old Church Slavonic *mežda* “street”, “lane”, while in Modern Russian *meža* means “border”.<sup>18</sup> We can observe a transition from “border” to “street” in these languages with both meanings present for some time. This would explain the occurrence of the *dual* form, which seems perplexing at first sight: “in the area of the two borders”, that is “in the area defined by them” > “in the area between them”.<sup>19</sup> (In Old Church Slavonic, *meždu* can be both preposition and adverb.)<sup>20</sup> These Slavic forms can be derived from Proto-Slavic

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<sup>14</sup> “In English the figure of death with a scythe is known as the ‘Grim Reaper’”. I am indebted for this information to Annabel Barber. — I.O. *A határban a Halál kaszál...* “Death is Reaping in the Fields...” is the title of a selection from the diary of Pál Prónay, whose extreme right wing military detachment executed many communists and Jews in the aftermath of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919. This detachment was active mainly in the area of Kecskemét in the Great Hungarian Plain and carried out its executions usually in the outskirts of settlements. Prónay 1963.

<sup>15</sup> Serbian/Croatian *đ* (Cyrillic *ђ*) is a voiced alveolo-palatal sibilant affricate (IPA *dz*, *jz*; IPA number 216). The IPA symbol *z* denotes a voiced alveolo-palatal sibilant fricative (IPA number 183), while the IPA symbol *j* stands for a voiced palatal plosive (IPA number 108; Hungarian *gy*). According to Rešetar (1916:12 [§11, no. 8]), apart from Serbian/Croatian, the only other European language, where *đ* occurs is Polish and its pronunciation is very difficult for non-native speakers, but it is somewhere between *dz* and *dž*. Bräuer (1961:8) describes it as a “palatal voiced *dšj*”. According to Leskien (1919:38), it is “approximately *d’z’*”, where apostrophe denotes palatalization.

<sup>16</sup> TESZ II, 877.

<sup>17</sup> For the Old Slovenian form *mežda*, see Miklosich 1886:185. Its New Slovenian equivalent is *meja* [*meja*] “border”, “fence”. Bräuer 1961:199; Miklosich 1862–1865:365; 1886:185. TESZ II, 914–915. EWUNG 974.

<sup>18</sup> In Old Church Slavonic, *mežda* also means “centre”, “space between”, “distance”; Miklosich 1862–1865:365.

<sup>19</sup> Modern Russian “*meždu*”: *eigentlich* “*auf den beiden Grenzen*”; Bielfeldt 1961:176 (§219.4). On the locative dual form, see Leskien 1919:114–117.

<sup>20</sup> Vasmer 1986: II, 591–592. Bielfeldt 1961:176 (§219.4).

\**medja*, which is related to Greek μέσος “middle (adj.)”, Latin *medius* “middle (adj.)”, Old High German *mitti*, New High German *Mitte*, Modern English *mid*.<sup>21</sup> This \**dj* becomes *žd*’ in Old Church Slavonic (also Bulgarian) and *dž*’ > *ž*’ in Russian, but the precise correspondences in the Slavic languages (*dj*, *dz*, *z*, *đ*, *j*, *d’ž*, *žd*, *ždž*, etc.) are not quite clear; the situation is especially complex in the Southern Slavic languages.<sup>22</sup>

In the Frankish Empire of Charlemagne, a system of defensive areas was established on borders with hostile populations. These were then inherited by Charlemagne’s successors within the Carolingian dynasty and in the Holy Roman Empire; the system also spread to other parts of Europe. We are familiar with such terms as *Die Mark Brandenburg* or simply *Die Mark*, *Die Mark Meissen*, Italian [*Regione*] *Le Marche*,<sup>23</sup> English *march* / *mark*, French *La Marche*, etc. All these forms are akin to the Modern German *Mark*, Old High German *marka*, Modern English *mark* / *march*, Old English *merc* etc. and go back ultimately to an Indo-European form \**mereǵ-*, \**morg-* / \**mroǵ-*. Originally it meant “mark, sign; edge, border”, which soon evolved into “border area” because the two entities could not be distinguished in actual life.<sup>24</sup> (In some languages this word acquired the additional meaning “forest”).<sup>25</sup> The *Mark Brandenburg* was originally a special defensive area against Slavic tribes bordering on the Holy Roman Empire. Later, the border between the Germans and the Slavs was shifted a great distance to the east but the name was retained and the *Mark Brandenburg* or simply *Mark* came to denote an average province in the bosom of the Empire.<sup>26</sup> The case of the French *La Marche* and Italian [*Regione*] *Le Marche* was similar.

It is quite a remarkable finding that we have a basically identical situation with respect to the word “border” / “area” before us in several languages which are not closely related. This seems to be due to a universal feature rooted in the structure of our world and in common human experience.

The pair of expressions *awwal*<sup>u</sup> *ḥadd*<sup>in</sup> and *āḥir*<sup>u</sup> *ḥadd*<sup>in</sup> “first border” vs. “last border” often occurs in our texts.<sup>27</sup> In his work on the Arabic sources on the early Magyars, István Zimonyi fluctuates between two readings: “last border” (*āḥir*<sup>u</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Vasmer 1986: II, 591–592. Bräuer 1961:199. Miklosich 1862–1865:365. Pfeifer 2018: 879. Webster 1976:1429c.

<sup>22</sup> Bräuer 1961:199; Leskien 1919:37–38; Horálek 1962:105; Eckert, Crome, Fleckenstein 1983:50.

<sup>23</sup> In the plural, because this region consists of several historical *marche*.

<sup>24</sup> Pfeifer 2018:839a. Webster 1976:1380b [s.v. <sup>2</sup>*march*], 1382c.

<sup>25</sup> Vasmer 1986: II, 591–592 [s.v. *meža*].

<sup>26</sup> See, e.g., the widely-read *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg* by Theodor Fontane (1819–1898).

<sup>27</sup> I do not regard *fī awā’il ḥaddihā* (see n. 1 above) as belonging here.

*ḥadd<sup>in</sup>*) vs. “other border” (*āḥar<sup>u</sup> ḥadd<sup>in</sup>*).<sup>28</sup> The two expressions look identical in consonantal writing; the vowel must be supplied by the reader. This fluctuation is a clear indication that Zimonyi uses various translations and interpretations in different places, without remembering how he interpreted the same expression elsewhere. (Or is this perhaps a trace of different hands at work?) The interpretation “the other border” (*āḥar<sup>u</sup> ḥadd<sup>in</sup>*) can be found in Vámbéry’s translation of Bakrī’s account of the Magyars, from where Zimonyi might have borrowed it.<sup>29</sup> This translation is quoted in an important collection of sources on the early history of the Magyars, whose editor Count Kuun quotes Bakrī’s account of the Magyars from one of Vámbéry’s publications.<sup>30</sup> In this place *ḥadd* is in the singular, therefore Vámbéry’s rendering would indeed work, if we left the other occurrences out of consideration. In general, it would be acceptable, if the Magyars had two borders, a near one and another distant one.<sup>31</sup> However, these countries and peoples, among them the Magyars, have “numerous borders” (*ḥudūd*) in the view of Muslim geographers, evidently meaning “border sections”, “border areas” or “borderlands”, respectively. For instance, at the beginning of the Magyar chapter in Ibn Rusta we read: “*awwal ḥadd min ḥudūd al-Maġğariyya* / the first border from among the borders of the Magyars”, that is “the first of the Magyars’ border areas”, the one nearest to the author.<sup>32</sup> In Khvolson’s translation: “*perviy iz krayev Mad’yarskikh* the first from among the Magyar regions” (p. 25). On his part, Wiet simply skips this problematic expression (p. 160) as we have seen above: “*la frontière des Magyars* / the border of the Magyars”. Wehr also thinks that in these cases the meaning is determined by the assumption that there is a series of items at the head of which the item concerning us is located.<sup>33</sup>

As far as the grammar of Arabic is concerned, it must be pointed out that the adjective *follows* the noun it modifies, as is generally the case in Semitic tongues, in contradistinction to most European languages. Its opposite (the adjective *preceding* the noun) occurs in exceptional cases only, with elatives. This grammatical feature, involving a possessive structure (construct state) with a genitive and a lack of formal determination (determined article), although the whole structure is syntactically

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<sup>28</sup> Zimonyi 2016:45, 47, 363. It was during my careful study of this work that I came to be involved with the problem of the precise interpretation of the term *ḥadd*.

<sup>29</sup> Keleti kútfők, 195.

<sup>30</sup> This collection (“Keleti kútfők”) appeared on the occasion of the festivities marking the thousandth anniversary of the arrival of the Magyar tribes in the area of modern Hungary. The quotation is from Vámbéry, *A magyarok eredete*, 133: *a másik határ vidékén, mely a pusztával tőszomszédos, egy hegy emelkedik* “in the region of the other border, which is adjacent to the steppe, a mountain rises”. Cf. Vámbéry, *Ursprung*, 120; *an einer andern Grenze, die sich an die Steppe lehnt, befindet sich ein Berg* “on another border, which leans against the steppe, a mountain is located”. Kuun used the Hungarian edition.

<sup>31</sup> Wehr 1952:593/29<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> Ibn Rusta, *A lāq*, 142<sup>6-7</sup>. Cf. n. 4 above.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. nn. 4, 5 above. Wehr 1952:594/30. He quotes the expression *al-iqlīm al-awwal* etc. in geographical works as an example.

determined, runs contrary to the general rules of Arabic grammar, and lacks a satisfactory explanation. Examples of *awwal* and *āḥir* in this position are very common, also in Modern Standard Arabic (cf. the Egyptian weekly *Āḥir sâ'a* ["The Last Hour"]), and in the modern Cairene dialect, too.<sup>34</sup> The structure *awwal*<sup>m</sup> *rağul*<sup>in</sup> ("the first man") exists only with the ordinal *awwal*<sup>m</sup> in Classical Arabic but in later periods and in colloquial dialects it spread to the remaining ordinals, too: e.g. *tāniy<sup>a</sup> marra<sup>in</sup>* ("the second time").<sup>35</sup> (On the other hand, I cannot remember ever having come across *āḥar* in this construction.)

It must be borne in mind that the distinction between *āḥar* and *āḥir* is not so clear-cut as is sometimes assumed and that the situation is rendered somewhat complex by the circumstance that the ordinal *awwal* ("first") is an elative form and behaves accordingly, while *āḥar* ("other") and possibly *āḥir* ("last") were originally elatives, too, although the memory of this has faded. The original opposite of *awwal* seems to have been *āḥar*; its accepted meaning "the other" is secondary.<sup>36</sup> Originally these two adjectives *āḥar* ("other") and *āḥir* ("last") were closely related; at a later stage they separated into two distinct concepts, and the pair of opposites *awwal* ("first") / *āḥir* ("last") became firmly established in the language. However, the survival of a closer-than-usual relationship between the two is attested by the occasional occurrence of *uḥrā*, the feminine form of *āḥar* ("other"), in the meaning of "last": *qālat uḥrāhum li-ūlāhum* (Q 7:38) "the last of them shall say to the first of them"; *wa-qālat ūlāhum li-uḥrāhum* (Q 7:39) "the first of them shall say to the last of them"; *ukhrānā* "our descendants"; *lā af'aluhu uḥrā l-layālī* "I will not do it until the last nights/days [ever]"; *uḥrā l-qawm* "the last of the people"; *fī uḥrayāt an-nās* "in the last rows of the people, in the background" (opp. *ūlayāt*).<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Wright 1971: II, 227D. Nöldeke 1952: I, 12a (*āḥar*, *āḥir*); II, 52b<sup>11</sup> (*awwalan wa-āḥiran*). Woidich 2006:215. Wehr 1952:572/8 (no. 3), 574/10, 579/15–582/18, 588/24 and especially 592/28–595/31.

<sup>35</sup> Reckendorf 1921:146, n. 1. Wright 1971: II, 219BC. Wehr 1952:593/29, n. 3.

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