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Settlement Labels and the Limits of Urban Inference in Yāqūt's Muʿjam al-buldān: Qubā, Rishtān and Marghīnān in Farghāna

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Abstract

This article assesses what medieval settlement labels can - and cannot - establish about Farghāna through three entries in Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī's Muʿjam al-buldān, with Axsīkath, Andukān and Xwāqand as controls. The method distinguishes lexical terms, grammatical referents, transmitting voices and material witnesses. Qubā reveals circular corroboration: the Hyderabad al-Ansāb editor filled a manuscript lacuna using Yāqūt but printed Abī l-Ḥusayn, whereas inspected Yāqūt editions and a Dāmāj-labelled electronic transcription read Abī l-Ḥasan. Neither reading survives in the lacunose manuscript passage. Rishtān's earlier inclusion among mudun, its congregational mosque and Yāqūt's later min qurā wording belong to different descriptive contexts and do not constitute a dated sequence of urban decline. In Marghīnān, balda and min qurā occur in distinct clauses of the same compilation, producing a real but historically unresolved lexical contrast. Mosque and market descriptions, read alongside place-linked scholarly affiliations, offer limited evidence for represented communal spaces and networks, not a fixed social hierarchy. The cases show how dependence, genre and syntax constrain urban-historical inference without denying possible settlement change or claiming novelty for established identifications.

Keywords: Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Muʿjam al-buldān, Farghāna, source criticism, medieval settlement terminology

Introduction

Medieval Farghāna is reconstructed from sources composed for different purposes. Regional geographers described towns, roads and markets; biographical compilers recorded scholars and their nisbas; Yāqūt's thirteenth-

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century Muʿjam al-buldān brought such information together in alphabetically arranged place-name entries. A label such as madīna, balda or qarya is evidence of wording in a transmitted text, not by itself a dated observation of administrative status. (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, 1977).

Three interpretative errors recur: counting a modern editorial supplement and the work from which it was copied as independent evidence; treating words drawn from unlike genres as equivalent measures of urban status; and conflating a headword with the subject of a relational clause or with a modern locality. All three can be tested against the exact text and its transmission.

The article examines six Yāqūt notices in the designated Dār Ṣādir 1977 edition. Qubā, Rishtān and Marghīnān are the principal cases; Axsīkath, Andukān and Xwāqand provide controls for central-place terminology, biographical framing and orthography. The question is not whether Farghāna's settlements changed, but which changes these particular witnesses can demonstrate. (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, 1977, vols. 1–5).

This difference matters beyond the reading of individual toponyms. A transmitted classification can serve as evidence for a compiler's source selection, a biographer's network of affiliations or a geographer's ordering of space, yet it cannot serve each of these functions without qualification. The unit of comparison here is therefore the particular proposition rather than an undifferentiated 'description of a town.' The analysis asks who is speaking, which place is grammatically designated, what kind of information is conveyed and whether the surviving textual witness is independent. Only after these checks can a label contribute to a narrative of regional settlement history. This procedure keeps the historical question open rather than turning the absence of evidence for change into evidence of continuity.

Review of the Literature

The investigation of Yāqūt's sources, his editorial decisions, and the vocabulary of settlements is not new. F. Justus Heer distinguished geographical, historical, biographical, philological and poetic source materials and analysed Yāqūt's critical treatment of inherited reports. In a much closer regional and methodological predecessor, B. M. Irmatov's dissertation abstract explicitly identifies the risk of assigning tenth-century descriptions transmitted by Yāqūt to his own thirteenth-

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century present. Irmatov reports examining 120 notices concerning Khurāsān and Mā warāʾ al-nahr, analyses the rearrangement, abridgement and blending of earlier geographical texts, highlights al-Iṣṭakhrī's role in the Transoxanian material, and examines the handling of al-Samʿānī's nisba-related and biographical material. A full copy of his dissertation has not been consulted; the claims above follow the searchable full text of his 1993 avtoreferat rather than a folio-level autopsy. Accordingly, the present article does not claim priority for the general practice of distinguishing Yāqūt's observations from inherited reports, or for questioning the historical date of transmitted topographical descriptions. (Heer, 1898; Irmatov, 1993, pp. 3–6, 10–14, 19–22).

Sh. S. Kamoliddinov offers a second, locally decisive precedent. His Farghāna chapter enumerates 17 place names recorded by al-Samʿānī (nine towns, seven villages and one urban quarter), identifies Qubā with Quva, Xwāqand with Kokand and Andukān with Andijan, and compares al-Samʿānī, Yāqūt, al-Iṣṭakhrī and al-Muqaddasī. It characterizes Qubā as a large settlement, citing al-Samʿānī's Beirut edition at X:45, and discusses the built environment recorded by earlier geographers (pp. 125–129). The existence and identification of these localities, or the fact that their designation varies between texts, are therefore not discoveries made here. This article retains Kamoliddinov's bibliographical coordinates as his citations; his Beirut X:45 cannot be silently substituted with the distinct Hyderabad X:322 edition. His report of al-Muqaddasī's Marghīnān passage (p. 126) also creates a narrowly testable issue in interpretation that is examined below against the printed Arabic at p. 272. (Kamoliddinov, 1993, pp. 125–129).

Geographical-administrative terminology in Yāqūt has also been studied for al-Andalus by Gamal ʿAbd al-Karīm, whose work has been identified bibliographically but not read in full. Manzano-Rodríguez examines Yāqūt's Maghribi material and his use of al-Samʿānī for place-names and nisbas. Regional analysis and source-layer comparison thus have established precedents. (ʿAbd al-Karīm, 1972, bibliographic record only; Manzano-Rodríguez, 2022).

For the anthropological dimension, Abu-Lughod's critique of a unitary 'Islamic city' offers a useful conceptual warning against converting a few spatial features into a transhistorical social type. That argument is comparative historiography, not direct evidence about Farghāna; the present article therefore grounds its claims in the particular texts, places and witnesses examined here (Abu-Lughod, 1987).

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The contribution here is more specific: a Qubā example of dependence created by editorial supplementation; a genre-sensitive assessment of Rishtān's apparently divergent status labels; and a grammatical comparison of Marghīnān's balda and min qurā predicates, including a check on a modern paraphrase. These are reproducible tests of particular inferences, not claims of first discovery.

Methodology

❖ Evidence and editions

Corpus A comprises the six Yāqūt notices in the five-volume Dār Ṣādir edition (Beirut, 1977): Axsīkath I:121; Andukān I:261–262; Xwāqand II:399; Rishtān III:45; Qubā IV:302; Marghīnān V:108. The cited passages were examined in images of this printing. Such inspection establishes what it prints, not the reading of its uncollated medieval exemplars. Wüstenfeld's edition is used separately and never with Dār Ṣādir pagination. (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, 1977, vol. 1, pp. 121, 261–262; vol. 2, p. 399; vol. 3, p. 45; vol. 4, p. 302; vol. 5, p. 108).

Corpus B consists primarily of earlier regional geographical descriptions by al-Iṣṭakhrī, Ibn Ḥawqal and al-Muqaddasī. For Qubā, the relevant passage in the scanned de Goeje 1873 Ibn Ḥawqal edition (pp. 394–395) was directly inspected. It was compared with the page-keyed electronic transcription of the Kramers 1938 edition (II:267) and with Sh. S. Kamoliddin's 2011 Uzbek translation (p. 79), which is based on Kramers's critical text. This comparison checks textual and translational consistency, not the independence of the underlying medieval witnesses. The al-Iṣṭakhrī page-image copy consulted here is a 1927 Leiden/Brill photomechanical second edition of de Goeje's 1870 critical text (Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, vol. 1), not a newly independent medieval witness. Its printed Farghāna passages and selected apparatus were inspected at pp. 333–335 and 347–348; direct folio-level manuscript collation remains outstanding. In particular, an editorial apparatus variant must not be introduced as an independently attested main-text description. The three authors' list, route and built-environment descriptions are not automatically independent or interchangeable measurements. The relevant de Goeje 1906 edition of al-Muqaddasī has been checked at printed pp. 1, 7 and 272; the critical note Haec in B desunt concerns part of the Rishtān–Wānkath passage, but its precise omission span cannot be reconstructed without the underlying codex. The Persian original of the relevant Ḥudūd al-ʿālam notice remains unchecked and is not quoted as firsthand evidence. (al-Iṣṭakhrī, 1927, pp. 333–335, 347–348; Ibn

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Ḥawqal, 1873, pp. 394–395; Ibn Ḥawqal, 1938, vol. 2, p. 267, electronic transcription; Ibn Ḥawqal, 2011, p. 79; al-Muqaddasī, 1906, pp. 1, 7, 272).

Corpus C covers al-Samʿānī's al-Ansāb, manuscript facsimiles, later editions and scholarly comparisons. The Hyderabad printed supplement to a blank genealogy must not be counted as independent evidence for Yāqūt. A page-keyed transcription labelled as the Beirut/Dāmāj edition (X:45–46) reads Abī l-Ḥasan, but its printed page and underlying editorial apparatus have not been visually inspected. (al-Samʿānī, 1979, vol. 10, p. 322; al-Samʿānī, n.d., vol. 10, pp. 45–46, electronic transcription).

The distinction between access and textual independence is applied consistently. Photographs of a printed page permit an exact statement about that printing, but not about a manuscript reading absent from its apparatus. A transcription can be searched and compared, yet its provenance and typography may be uncertain. A modern paraphrase can identify a scholarly interpretation, but it cannot override the Arabic wording it claims to translate. These distinctions are especially consequential for Qubā, because the apparent agreement of several modern printed texts could otherwise disguise a single inherited source or editorial intervention.

- **Clause-level comparison and witness independence**

Each contested statement is recorded with its exact wording, edition and page, immediate grammatical subject, genre and source attribution. The analysis distinguishes what a witness prints, what a modern editor supplies and what a historian may infer. A headword, a scholar's nisba and the subject of a geographical clause are not automatically identical.

To prevent overconfident place identification, a distinct identification confidence field records whether a name, locality relationship, distance and modern location have each been independently supported. Verification is graded by access, not authority or independence: A = an inspected original page image of a named witness or print; B = a page-linked electronic transcription or apparatus without a local photograph; C = translation or modern secondary quotation; D = catalogue evidence for location alone. A modern edition can be A-level for what that edition prints yet wholly dependent for the content it supplies. Conversely, two photographed manuscripts with the same lacuna do not supply two readings of its absent letters, and their stemmatic independence still requires examination.

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For each case, the working comparison records five separate variables: the printed Arabic term; its immediate referent; the attributed voice or source; the date and genre of the transmitting work; and the physical or digital form in which the wording was verified. A sixth variable concerns the inference being tested—for example, whether a lexical contrast demonstrates a change in urban functions. The matrix deliberately allows an entry to be certain as printed and uncertain in historical interpretation. This is preferable to a single confidence score that conceals whether uncertainty arises from homonymy, a textual lacuna, the date of information or the selection of a modern administrative equivalent. Table 1 presents the decisive evidence in compact form, retaining the terms and their referents, source/genre, access status, and the specific inference under test; it is a selective display of the clause-level comparison, not a claim that every working identification field is reproduced.

A preliminary source-voice audit also records attribution markers inside Yāqūt's prose. The words preceding a citation, material explicitly introduced by a named authority, and an inherited first-person declaration need not share the same speaker. The Qubā notice is a particularly clear control because عن ابن طاهر, ونسب إليها أبو سعد and the inherited وسمعت منه occur in close succession; the last belongs to the reported voice of al-Samʿānī, not the compiler Yāqūt. The immediate syntactic scope of عن ابن طاهر is not assumed to include every following statement; an attribution cue is not proof of a single source for the entire entry. (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, 1977, vol. 4, p. 302).

The semantic rules are likewise restrictive. A phrase X min qurā Y has two functions: it places X in an inclusive or relational set associated with Y, and it uses the noun qurā, whose ordinary village-related meaning may remain relevant. Grammar alone does not erase that semantic content. When X is elsewhere called balda, the texts warrant recognition of a lexical tension; they do not automatically identify its cause as source abbreviation, genre, administrative change or a settlement's decline. Al-Muqaddasī's own metalinguistic statement, والبلد يعمّ المصر والقصبة والرستاق والكورة والناحية (Aḥsan al-taqāsīm, de Goeje 1906:7), warns against making balad a modern fixed municipal rank. It is his usage, not an automatically universal definition imposed on Yāqūt. (al-Muqaddasī, 1906, p. 7).

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Results

Table 1. Source terms, referents, verification status and inference limits

Case	Term / referent and evidence	Witness / genre / access; inference limit
Qubā	Yāqūt: madīna kabīra refers to Farghāna's Qubā (IV:302); the genealogy prints Abī l-Ḥasan. Hyderabad al-Ansāb (X:322) supplies Abī l-Ḥusayn within a lacuna.	Yāqūt: thirteenth-century compilation, 1977 print [A]; Hyderabad: edited 1979 genealogy [A]; manuscript lacuna pictured [A]. Editorial supplementation is dependent; the lost letters are unverified.
Rishtān	Ibn Ḥawqal: Rishtān occurs in an upper-Nasya mudun list (1873:395). Al-Muqaddasī: one mosque with two entrances (1906:272). Yāqūt: Rishtān min qurā Marghīnān (III:45).	Tenth-century geographical prints [A]; Kramers electronic text [B]; thirteenth-century geographical-biographical entry [A]. These descriptions do not date any decline or establish a constant legal rank.
Marghīnān	Yāqūt: balda designates Marghīnān itself (V:108); another notice states Marghīnān min qurā Farghāna (III:45). Al-Muqaddasī reports its mosque away from markets (1906:272).	Different clauses in one later compilation [A]; earlier geographical description [A]. The lexical contrast and spatial relationship are visible; administrative demotion and its date are not.
Controls	Axsīkath: madīna plus qaṣaba (Yāqūt I:121); Andukān: qarya in a biographical entry (I:261–262); Xwāqand: printed khwākand spelling (II:399).	Yāqūt 1977 printed notices [A]. These examples guard against equating terms, homonyms or transcription variants with modern rank; uninspected medieval readings remain unresolved.

Qubā: editorial supplementation and apparent corroboration

❖ Locality, nisba and source voices

Yāqūt's Qubā entry first discusses other namesakes, including Qubā near Medina, before describing Farghāna's Qubā as مدينة كبيرة من ناحية فرغانة قرب الشاش ('a large town in the Farghāna district near al-Shāsh'). The sequence matters because a Medinan name or nisba cannot be uncritically transferred to the Farghāna locality. The same passage uses the attribution markers عن ابن طاهر and ونسب إليها أبو سعد, introducing Ibn Ṭāhir and Abū Saʿd al-Samʿānī at different points. The associated genealogy in the designated Dār Ṣādir IV:302 reads أبي الحسن and prints القبائي in the Farghāna context. Neither the exact reach of Ibn Ṭāhir's statement nor Yāqūt's eyewitness experience can be inferred from those cues. A separate electronic transcription bears a different printing label; its agreement in wording does not establish bibliographical identity with Dār Ṣādir. (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, 1977, vol. 4, p. 302).

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The photographed Hyderabad al-Ansāb X:322 (no. 3155) places Farghāna's settlement under the heading القباوي, describes it as بلدة كبيرة من بلاد فرغانة and explains that the affiliative form adds a wāw. By contrast, the following entry, القبائي (X:323, no. 3156), concerns the locality near Medina. This pair distinguishes the two entries within one edition; it does not prove that the same spelling always identifies the same place in every text. Indeed, Yāqūt's inspected Dār Ṣādir printing uses القبائي in its Farghāna-related biography. The place description and transmission context thus carry more identifying weight than a nisba alone. Finally, Yāqūt's madīna kabīra and al-Samʿānī's balda kabīra are comparable descriptions but not necessarily independent observations of legal or administrative rank. (al-Samʿānī, 1979, vol. 10, pp. 322–323).

The Qubā notice also shows why source voice matters. The formula ونسب إليها أبو سعد وسمعت منه introduces al-Samʿānī's biographical material, including the inherited ('I heard from him'). In al-Samʿānī's longer notice, that hearing occurred in Bukhārā, not at Qubā. It cannot be reassigned to Yāqūt or converted into evidence that either author visited the settlement. The backward scope of عن ابن طاهر remains uncertain. (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, 1977, vol. 4, p. 302; al-Samʿānī, 1979, vol. 10, p. 322).

❖ A lacuna and competing editorial restorations

The most consequential evidence is negative. The reproduced manuscript of al-Samʿānī, British Museum Add MS 23355, fol. 441r (Leiden facsimile, 1912, PDF image 882), shows a break in the genealogy of Abū l-Makārim Rizq Allāh al-Qubāwī. Another photographed al-Ansāb context, carrying an Imperial Library stamp (supplied scan, PDF p. 225), also has a lacuna at the genealogical locus. They are two photographed contexts, not two directly visible readings of the missing words. The second manuscript's shelfmark and its codicological independence from Add MS 23355 have not been established. (al-Samʿānī, 1912, fol. 441r).

In the 1979 Hyderabad edition of al-Samʿānī's al-Ansāb, X:322, no. 3155, the textual editor supplies two fragments within square brackets: أبو]المكارم [رزق الله بن]محمد بن أبي الحسين بن عمر [القباوي. The printed note (2) states: من معجم البلدان لياقوت نقلا عن السمعاني، وفي أصول الأنساب بياض—the additions were drawn from Yāqūt's Muʿjam al-buldān, which quoted al-Samʿānī, while the al-Ansāb copies used for the edition had a blank. Both bracketed restorations and the editorial note were rechecked against the photographed Hyderabad X:322 (PDF p. 322); the immediately following X:323, no. 3156, contains the separate Medina-related القبائي entry. The footnote is explicit about

the blank in the al-Ansāb exemplars; the restoration is not an independently preserved genealogy. The Hyderabad colophon (PDF p. 547) dates this particular volume to 27 April 1979 and identifies Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Hāshimī al-ʿAlawī as textual editor and annotator. Neither that colophon nor the note identifies the particular Yāqūt exemplar used to make the restoration. (al-Samʿānī, 1979, vol. 10, p. 322, editorial note 2).

The variation is substantive. The photographed Dār Ṣādir 1977 IV:302 reads رزق الله بن محمد بن أبي الحسن بن عمر القبائي; the previously inspected Wüstenfeld 1869 IV:24 also has the al-Ḥasan reading. These are statements about printed forms, not established independent manuscript lineages. A newly located PDF text layer of al-Samʿānī's Bārūdī 1988 IV:441 reads رزق الله بن محمد بن أبي الحسن بن عمر القباوي (the page marker (441) precedes the القباوي entry); that page photograph has not been checked. A page-keyed electronic transcription labelled the Muḥammad Amīn Dāmāj edition (vol. X, pp. 45–46) likewise gives رزق الله بن محمد بن أبي الحسن بن عمر القباوي. This establishes a reading of a labelled electronic text, NOT an inspected Dāmāj printed page and not an al-Samʿānī manuscript reading. Bārūdī's preface (1988, I:13, searchable text) identifies the Dāmāj printed edition as his main textual basis, making modern-edition dependence a live possibility. His wording should not be treated as an independent manuscript witness to the contested genealogical words; Bārūdī's and Dāmāj's printed-page typography and apparatus require direct collation. In contrast, Hyderabad's al-Ansāb X:322 prints [محمد بن أبي الحسين بن عمر] as a supplement expressly attributed to Yāqūt. Agreement between modern printed editions cannot be mechanically counted as independent medieval witnesses. The observed evidence therefore supports Abī l-Ḥasan as the preferable conjectural restoration, but it does not establish that al-Samʿānī's autograph or the common ancestor of the available copies contained that spelling. (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, 1869, vol. 4, p. 24; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, 1977, vol. 4, p. 302; al-Samʿānī, 1988, vol. 4, p. 441; al-Samʿānī, n.d., vol. 10, pp. 45–46, electronic transcriptions only).

The genealogy provides a particularly sharp test of corroboration. If a modern edition of al-Ansāb fills a missing sequence by extracting words from Yāqūt's report of al-Samʿānī, the two printed occurrences cannot be treated as separate attestations of that sequence. Their agreement may be the product of the very editorial operation under investigation. Conversely, the difference between al-Ḥasan and the Hyderabad editor's al-Ḥusayn is a genuine printed-text discrepancy even though it cannot restore the erased manuscript reading. A defensible reconstruction must

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therefore state its preferred form conditionally and identify the evidence still needed: a manuscript with legible letters at the locus or a critically documented independent line of transmission. Neither condition is supplied by the available photocopies or the page-keyed transcription.

- **Geographical descriptions are different evidence**

Earlier geographical descriptions ask different questions. The directly inspected de Goeje 1873 printing of Ibn Ḥawqal (p. 394) describes Qubā's madīna, qahandaz and rabaḍ, and places the congregational mosque in the qahandaz and the markets, government residence and prison in the rabaḍ. It also describes the qahandaz as ruined. The same functional distribution is reported in the Kramers 1938 page-keyed electronic transcription (II:267) and in Kamoliddin's Uzbek translation (2011, p. 79); the latter two are comparison controls, not additional independent medieval testimonies. These geographical observations differ from Yāqūt's compressed designation and biographical report and cannot corroborate a missing personal name. (Ibn Ḥawqal, 1873, p. 394, inspected printed page; Ibn Ḥawqal, 1938, vol. 2, p. 267, electronic transcription; Ibn Ḥawqal, 2011, p. 79).

A particularly instructive comparison is al-Muqaddasī's description in Aḥsan al-taqāsīm (1906 de Goeje print, p. 272, now directly inspected in a page image; library PDF page 274). He judges Qubā more spacious and attractive than the recognized qaṣaba and then explains his decision not to award it that label: لما كان التعارف عندنا مقدما على القياس. In context, established naming convention takes precedence over his own assessment of the city's merits. This explicit reflection is evidence against a mechanical equation of qaṣaba with the settlement having the largest built-up area, the richest landscape, or the most impressive market. It does not by itself explain every earlier or later administrative use of qaṣaba, and the relevant wording is now verified in the image of the 1906 printed edition (level A for that printing). Read beside Yāqūt's description of Axsīkath as قصبة ناحية فرغانة (Dār Ṣādir 1977, I:121, printed facsimile inspected in the cited print), the passage shows why descriptive urban attributes and conventional central-place labels should be coded separately. (al-Muqaddasī, 1906, p. 272; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, 1977, vol. 1, p. 121).

Rishtān: classification across unlike genres

The relevant clause in Yāqūt's Rishtān notice reads من قرى مرغينان، ومرغينان من قرى فرغانة بما وراء النهر (Muʿjam al-buldān, III, 45, Dār Ṣādir 1977, printed image checked). Two clauses must be distinguished. The first places Rishtān among the qurā of

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Marghīnān. The second places Marghīnān among the qurā of Farghāna. Syntactically, they share a construction, but the subject of the relation changes. Neither clause mentions a date of a town's destruction or a decline in population. The notice also associates Rishtān with a scholar known by its nisba, identifying a biographical function for the entry. (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, 1977, vol. 3, p. 45).

The noun qurā retains its ordinary semantic association with villages; a source critic should not arbitrarily redefine it as "districts" in every context. Yet it also appears in relational descriptions of settlements and dependent localities, and it cannot be assigned a modern population cutoff without further evidence. Ibn Ḥawqal's wider description of Farghāna notes the exceptional extent and abundance of its qurā, some of which could encompass a considerable distance (accessible online Arabic text, II, 267). This is contextual evidence against an unqualified small-village assumption, not a direct measurement of Rishtān. (Ibn Ḥawqal, 1938, vol. 2, p. 267, electronic transcription).

In the directly inspected de Goeje 1873 printing (p. 395), Ibn Ḥawqal lists Rishtān among the mudun of upper Nasya. The Kramers 1938 edition, as available in a page-keyed electronic transcription (II:267), also places Rishtān in the regional urban list, although the neighboring Sūj/Sūkh form differs between the editions and should not be silently standardized. The listing establishes that Rishtān was treated as a madīna-class place in the tenth-century geographical account. It does not supply the criteria behind Yāqūt's later min qurā construction or establish uninterrupted fiscal or legal status between the tenth and thirteenth centuries. (Ibn Ḥawqal, 1873, p. 395, inspected printed page; Ibn Ḥawqal, 1938, vol. 2, p. 267, electronic transcription).

Al-Muqaddasī gives a more locally textured description: ورشتان كبيرة للجامع باب في الأسواق وآخر في الميدان (Aḥsan al-taqāsīm, 1906 de Goeje ed., p. 272, image verified). His statement describes Rishtān as large and specifies two entrances of a single congregational mosque, one facing the markets and the other the square. Grammatically, the singular bāb and its elliptical counterpart ākhar denote entrances; the sentence does not attest two separate congregational mosques. This is built-environment evidence rather than a legal settlement classification. The text therefore conveys identifiable urban functions and spatial organization, even though the same paragraph also uses descriptive labels for neighbouring places. It

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does not supply a documented later event explaining Yāqūt's different wording. (al-Muqaddasī, 1906, p. 272).

The mosque example shows why functional indicators should be distinguished from settlement categories. Two entrances to one congregational mosque indicate an arrangement of movement and public space in al-Muqaddasī's description. They do not provide a count of mosques; a precise population estimate or a legal definition of madīna. Likewise, the route connection in al-Iṣṭakhrī demonstrates the place's position in a network as presented by an edited tenth-century geographical text. Neither claim supplies evidence for the timing of a later loss of municipal functions. Establishing such a sequence would require independently dated administrative, archaeological or documentary material, not merely two differently purposed labels. De Goeje's 1927 photomechanical reproduction of the 1870 al-Iṣṭakhrī printing provides a useful route control. Its edited p. 335 passes from Sūj to Rishtān, then to Zandaramsh and Qubā; another branch proceeds through Xwāqand toward Axsīkath. Yet the status of the names in the edition's critical apparatus is not uniform. The editor notes that Bologna (A) and Berlin (B) are sine punctis for the Rishtān locus. Nor are the five lettered sigla five separate Arabic Istaxriy manuscripts: in the editor's legend C designates a Gotha epitome, D denotes his Ibn Ḥawqal text, and E a Persian version. De Goeje (1871, 43) had already argued that A and B trace back to a shared exemplar. The relation among these printed readings therefore requires stemmatic caution rather than numerical vote-counting (al-Iṣṭakhrī 1927, 333–335; de Goeje 1871, 43). (al-Iṣṭakhrī, 1927, pp. 333–335; de Goeje, 1871, p. 43).

One further layer makes this restraint necessary. In a page-keyed electronic text of Ibn Ḥawqal II:270, the itinerary contains an editorially supplied [من رشتان]. Since the relevant printed apparatus has not been independently inspected in that edition, it is a text-layer warning, not a new proof that all manuscripts contain the same route connection. Likewise, a nineteenth-century de Goeje text and its 1927 photomechanical reprint do not count as independent witnesses. The direct printed al-Iṣṭakhrī itinerary is sufficient to establish that the editor's text has a route connection; it is insufficient to date a demographic or institutional change at Rishtān. (al-Iṣṭakhrī, 1927, p. 335; Ibn Ḥawqal, 1938, vol. 2, p. 270, electronic transcription).

A targeted archaeological-evidence control. Belenitskii, Bentovich and Bolshakov (1973, printed p. 205; supplied PDF image 208) explicitly caution that for Rishtān, Osh and Khujand the remains of the pre-Mongol city have been obliterated by repeated habitation at the same site. Their comment restricts the archaeological resolution presently supplied by that monograph: it neither independently documents a dated collapse of Rishtān nor disproves a possible change of status. The same authors report more concrete but differently qualified evidence for Qubā/Quva (printed p. 204; PDF image 207): a surviving segment of the rabāḍ wall, a conditional extrapolation of the rabāḍ's area to at least eighty hectares if comparable distances continued elsewhere, and a medieval kiln and glass workshop (citing excavation literature rather than providing stratigraphic publication in this passage). Archaeological evidence is therefore uneven across the two cases and must not be represented as a uniform check on the lexical labels. (Belenitskii et al., 1973, pp. 204–205).

The earlier sources depict Rishtān as a place included among mudun and possessing a congregational mosque; Yāqūt later places it among Marghīnān's qurā. A change in settlement functions remains possible, but the cited labels and observations alone cannot date or demonstrate one.

Marghīnān: referents within one compilation

The third case does not require two separate authors to generate a lexical contrast. In its own entry, Yāqūt describes Marghīnān as بلدة بما وراء النهر من أشهر البلاد من نواحي فرغانة (Muʿjam al-buldān, Dār Ṣādir 1977, V, 108; original printed image verified in the cited print). The headword Marghīnān is the referent of balda; the notice places it in the Farghāna region, emphasizes its renown, and associates it with learned figures. As a standalone entry this is a positive description of a settlement, but neither its concise length nor its balda label supplies a statistical estimate of its inhabitants or a modern municipal rank. (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, 1977, vol. 5, p. 108).

In the Rishtān notice (III:45), the construction من قرى مرغينان، ومرغينان من قرى فرغانة first relates Rishtān to Marghīnān, then places Marghīnān among Farghāna's qurā. The second clause genuinely predicates min qurā of Marghīnān, rather than using Marghīnān merely as a geographical container. Its village-related meaning cannot be discarded; equally, the difference from balda does not reveal its date, source

provenance or the cause of any reclassification. (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, 1977, vol. 3, p. 45).

An image-verified description in al-Muqaddasī adds a distinct morphological comparison rather than a commensurable legal category. On the same printed page that describes Rishtān as kabīra ('large'), Marghīnān is termed صغيرة أيضا (ṣaghīra ayḍan, 'also small'); its congregational mosque is described as distant from the markets, with a watercourse by its entrance: وجامعها ناء عن الأسواق على بابه نهر (Aḥsan al-taqāsīm, de Goeje 1906, p. 272, original printed image re-inspected). The location of the stream and the distance from the markets are attributed to Marghīnān, not to Rishtān. These co-located sentences provide an unusually clear control: al-Muqaddasī reports relative size and mosque siting, while Yāqūt's later notices use relational min qurā and independent balda. Neither the 10th-century small/large contrast nor the 13th-century place-type vocabulary directly measures demographic growth, decline, or formal status change. These comparisons are level A for the 1906 printed al-Muqaddasī and for the relevant 1977 Yāqūt page images, not for medieval manuscript autopsy. (al-Muqaddasī, 1906, p. 272).

- **Control of a secondary paraphrase.**

Kamoliddinov, discussing this very al-Muqaddasī passage, describes the Marghīnān congregational mosque as located among the markets and the river as flowing beside the town gates. Yet de Goeje's printed Arabic reads وجامعها ناء عن الأسواق على بابه نهر: nāʾ ʿan al-aswāq puts the mosque away from the markets, and the singular suffix in bābihi refers naturally to its mosque entrance, not to plural city gates. The exact wording of the printed Arabic must control the English translation; the later paraphrase is a documented counterexample of referent drift in modern historiography rather than independent evidence for Marghīnān's physical topography. The disagreement is established by page-image inspection of both printed works, not by consulting the medieval manuscript witnesses. (Kamoliddinov, 1993, p. 126; al-Muqaddasī, 1906, p. 272).

The comparison also establishes the limits of the corrective claim. It is the position of the mosque relative to the markets, and the referent of the singular entrance, that can be corrected against the printed Arabic. No new map of Marghīnān's medieval streets follows from that correction. The observation illustrates how a secondary summary may shift a relational phrase from one structure to another, especially when neighboring sentences describe several settlements. Accordingly, the

argument concerns the fidelity of a specific paraphrase, not the general reliability of an entire earlier study. The same restraint applies to the balda/min qurā contrast: lexical inconsistency is established, but intentional ranking, editorial abbreviation and real urban change remain hypotheses requiring other evidence.

Thus, balda and min qurā represent a documented lexical tension within Yāqūt. Their syntactic settings can coexist in a compilation, but no named source or independently dated event yet explains why the two forms were retained.

- **Three comparative controls**

Axsīkath. Yāqūt's notice calls the settlement a madīna and قصبة ناحية فرغانة (Dār Ṣādir 1977, I:121, original printed page inspected). A single place can thus receive an ordinary settlement descriptor and a designation of centrality in the same article. Al-Muqaddasī's reflection on the qaṣaba status of Qubā shows why central-place labels cannot be inferred from beauty, wealth, or the size of gardens alone. This controls against the over-simple definition of qaṣaba as a directly observed physical magnitude. It does not establish that every occurrence of qaṣaba denotes exactly the same institution. (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, 1977, vol. 1, p. 121; al-Muqaddasī, 1906, p. 272).

Andukān. The description of Andukān as a qarya and the attached learned-person biography require separate fields. Another Andukān near Sarakhs must be kept distinct. This separation was already treated by Kamoliddinov, so it is a control for homonym detection and source voice, not a priority discovery. The previously identified al-Samʿānī → al-Lubāb → Yāqūt transmission questions remain open at the level of individual manuscripts and printed readings; no manuscript archetype is reconstructed here. (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, 1977, vol. 1, pp. 261–262; Kamoliddinov, 1993, pp. 128–129).

Xwāqand. In the directly inspected Dār Ṣādir 1977 II:399 page, the printed form is خواكند, explained with a kāf after the alif. A separately consulted page-keyed electronic Yāqūt text has خواقند and a qāf. Without direct identification of that electronic text's underlying print or manuscript, the contrast is an edition/transcription discrepancy, not evidence of two independently preserved medieval variants. The conventional research label Xwāqand is retained; the precise Arabic form is always attributed to its witness. The modern identification with Qo'qon and its presence among earlier geographers' urban lists had already been

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discussed by Kamoliddinov (1993, 128), and neither is claimed as a discovery here. (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, 1977, vol. 2, p. 399; Kamoliddinov, 1993, p. 128).

Discussion

The three cases require distinct tests: witness dependence for Qubā; comparison of like with like for Rishtān; and subject-sensitive parsing for Marghīnān. An inspected printed page can establish a variant or a grammatical relation, but the historical cause of a settlement label still requires dated, independent evidence.

It would nevertheless be equally unsound to deny all historical change in medieval Farghāna. Barthold's reconstruction of changing regional urban prominence is a substantial historiographical proposal; Belenitskii, Bentovich and Bolshakov subsequently discuss relevant archaeological and topographical evidence. What this article tests is the specific evidentiary move from Yāqūt's min qurā to a dated verdict of decline. In Rishtān, the tenth-century mudun classification, al-Muqaddasī's mosque description, and Yāqūt's later nisba entry differ in purpose and immediate historical resolution. Their juxtaposition generates a research question, not a measured decline curve. (Barthold, 1965, p. 534; Belenitskii et al., 1973, pp. 204–205).

The comparison yields three operational standards for subsequent research. First, a restored passage should carry a traceable editorial-dependence note before it is used as corroboration. Second, urban terminology should be compared alongside built-environment information only when each datum retains its author, date, scale and descriptive purpose. Third, the grammatical scope of an affiliation formula must be established before a change of status is proposed. These standards are falsifiable: a newly examined manuscript could preserve the missing Qubā letters; dated material might independently document Rishtān's reorganization; and a secure source attribution could explain Marghīnān's two labels. None of those possibilities is foreclosed here. Their current evidentiary status, however, should not be advanced beyond the surviving witnesses.

Anthropological Implications of Medieval Settlement Classification

Settlement labels can contribute to the historical anthropology of Farghāna only when they are read together with more specific accounts of communal facilities and affiliations. Yāqūt's madīna, balda and min qurā characterize places within different

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lexical and biographical contexts; they do not themselves measure population, status hierarchy or administrative authority. The analytical gain is to distinguish named communities and relationships among places from the practices and spaces that other authors actually describe. (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, 1977, vol. 3, p. 45; vol. 4, p. 302; vol. 5, p. 108).

The geographical accounts offer bounded evidence for the spatial organization of collective activities. In Ibn Ḥawqal's Qubā description, the congregational mosque is placed in the qahandaz, while markets, the government residence and the prison are located in the rabaḍ; he also calls the qahandaz ruined. Al-Muqaddasī instead places Qubā's mosque among the markets. The difference cannot date a relocation or yield a single recoverable town plan. At Rishtān, al-Muqaddasī records two entrances to one congregational mosque, opening toward the markets and the square; at Marghīnān, he places the mosque away from the markets and notes a watercourse at its entrance. These descriptions locate worship, exchange and authority in differently represented urban spaces, but do not identify the social composition of their users. (Ibn Ḥawqal, 1873, p. 394; al-Muqaddasī, 1906, p. 272).

Relational formulas and scholarly nisbas add another dimension: Yāqūt places Rishtān among Marghīnān's qurā and Marghīnān among Farghāna's qurā, while biographical material associates learned individuals with named localities. This is evidence for represented territorial and scholarly belonging, not proof of migration volumes, residence patterns or formal jurisdiction. Thus, the sources permit a limited, comparative account of the spatial settings of congregational worship and commerce and of the place-based vocabulary of affiliation. They do not justify a uniform model of the 'Islamic city' or an inferred social stratification for these settlements (Abu-Lughod, 1987; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, 1977, vol. 3, p. 45; vol. 4, p. 302; vol. 5, p. 108).

Scope of the contribution

The study's contribution is the joined, source-auditable comparison: Qubā links a photographed lacuna to an editorial supplement explicitly borrowed from Yāqūt; Rishtān brings a town list and mosque description into comparison with a later relational formula without inventing a decline sequence; Marghīnān preserves the force of both balda and min qurā while checking al-Muqaddasī's wording against a divergent modern paraphrase. Earlier scholars established the localities and the

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broader method. The value of these cases lies instead in marking the boundary between surviving wording and stronger historical claims.

Conclusion

Qubā demonstrates why a genealogy restored from Yāqūt cannot independently corroborate its source: the manuscript is lacunose, and Abī l-Ḥasan remains a plausible, not proven, restoration. Rishtān's earlier mudun designation and later min qurā phrase do not establish a dated urban decline. Marghīnān's balda and min qurā predicates differ lexically, but their historical relationship remains unexplained. Reports of mosque and market placement, combined with scholarly nisbas and regional formulas, nonetheless offer limited evidence for how communal spaces and local affiliations were represented. Clause, witness, editorial intervention and descriptive genre must therefore be kept distinct before inferring either a settlement's urban trajectory or the social relations of its inhabitants.

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