**Russian Arabic Contact and its Treatment in Dictionaries**

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**Abstract**:

This study deals with the historical stages of Russian Arabic contact and the cultural, political, commercial, and religious bridges and channels through which the two languages have interacted since the seventh century, directly and indirectly through Oriental, Slavic and European languages. It also deals with the treatment of dictionaries of this contact and examines various etymological dictionaries in Russian, Arabic, English and German. The study reaches the conclusion that research in this lexicological aspect has been insufficient so far and lexicographers and lexicologists are invited to explore this exciting field of study.

**Key Words:** Culture, Russian, Arabic, *languages*, Dictionaries

**I. Russian Contact with Oriental Languages**

**Russian Arabic contact** has been going on for more than a thousand years through the East and the West, directly and indirectly. **In the East** or the Orient, it has taken place through Eastern Slavic contact with Oriental languages, mainly Iranian and Turkic, which started in the seventh century BC and continued till the 8th century AD. The contact with Arabic intensified with the spread of Islam in the seventh century into Iraq, Iran, India, and to the north into Kazakhstan, Uzbeckstan, and Khyrgyzstan.

**According to Terence** “A number of words, manly of religious nature, entered Common Slavic from Iranian languages c. 700 BC to c. 200 AD, perhaps as the result of links with Scythians and other semi-nomadic pastoralists in the southern steppes.” For example, the words (БОТ = GOD), МИР = PEACE, and РАЙ = PARADISE come from Persian[[2]](#footnote-2), a language that extremely influenced Arabic as well.

**In the West**, Russian Arabic contact took place indirectly through Western Slavic languages or Latin languages from the beginning of the 10th century, when Christianity was adopted in Russia in 988 AD. This contact increased through pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and through trade, translations, and cultural relations with the Western countries till the 19th century, and became intensive in the 20th century during the Soviet period through political, economic, industrial and military relations between Russia and the Arab countries.

**1. The Kievan Period (9th – 11th) Centuries**[[3]](#footnote-3)

**A. Arab Travelers and Geographers.**

**Ahmad Ibn Fadlan’s Trip to Russia and Scandinavia**

The earliest recorded direct contact between Russian and Arabic took place in the 10th century when the Arab messenger/ traveler/geographer Ahmad Ibn Fadlan أحمد بن فضلان [[4]](#footnote-4) was sent by Caliph al-Muqtadir Billah (895 – 932 AD) on a journey to meet the King of Bulgars (Saqaliba / Slavs) in 921-924 AD. The purpose of his mission was to collect information about the lands and people of the areas and acquaint the king with the new Religion, Islam, and if possible, to persuade him to convert to the new religion. Ibn Fadlan wrote a treatise called *Risalat Ibn Fadlan* describing his journey through the lands of the Turks, Khazar, Slavs, Russians, and Scandinavians and many tribes along the Volga.

The first Russian words that entered Arabic were “Rus” and Russia”. According to Crichton’s *Eaters of the Dead* [[5]](#footnote-5) and Ghayba,[[6]](#footnote-6) Ibn Fadlan used the word “Russia” upon the real people whom he met in the present Russian lands, but the word **(Rus روس) or (Russia روسيه )** is the name of the first Scandinavian tribe that he first met.

**B. Russian Travelers and Pilgrims**

**St Varlaan (11th century)**

Pilgrimages by Russian bishops and travelers constituted another bridge of contact between Russian and Arabic. The interest of Russian travelers and pilgrims in the Arab countries, mainly in Palestine being the Holy Land, started in the 10th century after Christianity was adopted by Russia in 988 AD. According to W. Wilson[[7]](#footnote-7) there is a mention of pilgrimages to Palestine in the biography of St Theodosius at the beginning of 1022. St Varlaam, a monk of Kiev, was the first to visit the Holy Land of Palestine in 1062. Palestine then was under Islamic Arab rule.

**Abbott Daniel (12th century)**

The second recorded visit to the Holy Land of Palestine was made by Russian Abbott Daniel in (1106 – 1107). During his stay for 16 months, Abbott Daniel wrote a detailed description of 97 sites which are located in Palestine, Jordan, and Lebanon, especially those that have some connection to the life of Jesus Christ and Virgin Mary. Abbot Daniel visited the Galilee and stayed in Nazareth, where he mixed with Arabic speakers. Abbott Daniel’s description[[8]](#footnote-8) includes several Arabic words:

**Abbot Daniel's Words:**

**RUSSIAN ARABIC**

AMOR OMAR **(عمر)**

NASIRA al-NASIRA = Nazareth (الناصرة)

El-HEIDEMIEH al-ADHAMEYYIH = Edhem’s Grave**الأدهميه**

GHENNA JANNA **(جنه)** = Paradise

al-SAHIRA al-SAHIRA **( (الساهره**A Jerusalem Gate

SABA SABA **( (سابا**Nameof Saint

ELIAS ELIAS **(الياس**)Name of Prophet

BEISAN BISAN (**بيسان**) Name of a city

BEIT SAIDA BEIT AL-SAYIDA (**بيت السيده** ( Name of a town

AL-MASJID AL-AQSA AL-MASJID AL-AQSA **( (المسجد الأقصى** (MOSQUE).

**Other pilgrims** visited the Holy Land and described it, such as Archimandrite Agrafini who visited Palestine in 1370 and described the Arab peasants, their traditions and life; Vasilii (1465-1466), who visited Gaza and Jerusalem; Varsnuvii (1461-1462), who visited Palestine, Egypt and Sinai; and Vasilii Bozniakon in 1858, who visited Palestine too [[9]](#footnote-9)

**2. The Mogul Domination from 1273 - 1480**

The period of the Mogul invasions into Russia constitutes another stage of Russian Arabic interaction. The Mogul occupation brought a substantial increase in Oriental loanwords dealing with administration, finance, and communication.[[10]](#footnote-10) The Moguls ran their Empire through Turkic, which contacted and interacted with Iranian and Arabic. A number of (Turkic/ Persian/ Arabic) loans entered Russian from various fields, e.g.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **RUSSIAN** | **ENGLISH** | **ARABIC** |
| БАШМАК  | SHOE  | **بشمك**  |
| ИЗУМРУЛ  | EMERALD  | **زمرد**  |
| КАРАНДАШ  | PENCIL | **كرندش**  |
| КАРАД  | GUARD | **جاراد**  |
| ТАМАЖНЯ  | CUSTOMS | **تاماجني**  |
| БАРАБАН  | DRUM  | **برابان/ برزان** |

**Irek Bikkinin** [[11]](#footnote-11) also gives examples of a number of words arguing that they are Turkic that were borrowed by Russian through Arabic. These words in fact are Arabic but they were borrowed by Russian either directly or through European languages. The following examples exist in Turkic, Arabic and Russian:

| **RUSSIAN FROM TURKIC**  | **ARABIC** | **IN ARABIC** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| KISMET  | QISMEH | **قسمه** |
| MAMLUKE | MAMLUKE | **مملوك** |
| SARACEN | SHARQIYIN | **شرقيون** |
| SABBAT | SABBAT | **صباط** |
| SANDAL | SANDAL  | **صندل** |
| KEFIR | KAFIR | **كافر** |
| MAMMOUTH | MAMOUTH | **ماموث** |
| UHLAN | AHLAN  | **أهلا** |
| KAWAJAH | KHAWAJAH | **خواجه** |

The Mogul army was defeated in 1380 but their domination continued till 1480.

**3. The Moscovite Period (15th – 17th) Centuries**

In the 15th century, Turkey ruled the whole of the Middle East and most of the Arab countries. The Ottoman Empire allowed Russia to have a representative of the Patriarchate in Palestine. Bishops, Orientalists, authors, poets continued visiting Palestine between 14th and 19th century. Among these are: Monk Varsnovski in 1456, and Vasili Parski in 1465-1466. [[12]](#footnote-12)

**4. The Russian Empire Period (18th – 19th) Century**

**A. Orientalism and Russian Arabic Cultural Contacts**

The movement of Orientalism in Russia and the strong interest in Arabic studies among scholars and travelers contributed to the immediate interaction between Russian and Arabic, which increased through translations, trade, travels, pilgrimages, and missionary activity. During the rule of Peter the Great (1682-1725) Russian oriental studies gained support. Blair (1694-1738) was the pioneer. Similarly, Arab interest in Russian studies and culture increased during the 18th century onward. Orientalism constituted a major channel of Russian Arabic interaction.

**B. Russian Authors and Poets**

Russian authors and poets showed great interest in the Arab culture, especially in the Holy Land. Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852) visited Palestine in 1848 and visited Nazareth and Beirut. Lermontov (1814-1841) wrote his poem “Olive Branch of Palestine” inspired by the branch brought by his friend Moraviev who brought it from Palestine. Poet and critic Peter Viazamski visited Palestine in 1849-1850 and stayed in Jaffa and Jerusalem. Afram Norov (1795-1869) visited Palestine and Egypt in 1835 and wrote a book about the two countries[[13]](#footnote-13). Anglis Sofrin, a Russian journalist, also visited Palestine in 1889 and wrote a book titled *Palestine* where many Arabic words and village names are mentioned.[[14]](#footnote-14) In 1917, poet Ivan Bunin (1870-1953) visited the Middle East and even wrote a poem called “Chased Muhammad”[[15]](#footnote-15) The writings of many authors include Arabic words and their books constitute another channel of contact and interaction.

**C. The Russian Missionary Activity**

The Russian missionary activity in Palestine contributed to the creation of strong relationship between Russian speakers and Arabic speakers. In 1853, the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate established the missionary Russian Palestinian Association in Jerusalem. Bishop Porfirri Uspenskii, the first head of the Association (1843-1854), was among the first Russian researchers in the Christian Arab culture. He visited Palestine in 1843, and also brought many manuscripts to the library of St Petersburg.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Among the Association’s well-known Arabists was Mednikov, who wrote a book titled “Palestine since the Arab Conquest till the Crusade Wars in the Arab Sources” (1898) and participated in determining the teaching curriculum in the Committee’s Russian schools in Palestine and Syria. In 1883, he published a bibliography of everything that was written about Palestine[[17]](#footnote-17) In this way, the missionary activity created an atmosphere that made this language contact feasible.

**D. Teaching Arabic in Russia**

As a result of the continued relations and the widening and spreading activity of the Russian missionaries, there was a need to learn and teach Arabic in both Palestine and Russia. Arab and Russian scholars cooperated to achieve this goal.

**Ignatius Kratchkovski** (1883-1951), the neo-establisher of Arabic at St Petersburg University, visited Palestine in 1890 and Beirut in 1908 – 1910. He met the Palestinian writers, Sakakini, poet Nashashibi, and Kalthoum Odeh (1892-1965)[[18]](#footnote-18) , who married Ivan Vasiliev, a Russian doctor at the Girl’s School in Bet Jala. She left with him to Russia and became a well-known teacher and lecturer in Arabic language at the University of St Petersburg.

**Kratchkovski** is also considered a neo-founder of Russian oriental studies. He entered Arabic literature into Soviet schools and was in charge of Arabic at the Soviet Universities. Kratchkovski also translated a large number of classical and modern literary works and also had intensive correspondence with Arab scholars, poets and authors, which increased the bidirectional contact between Russian and Arabic. [[19]](#footnote-19)

**Khalil Baidas** (1875-1949),one of the well-known authors and founders of modern Palestinian literature, graduated from the Russian Seminar in Nazareth and became the Director of Russian schools in Syria and Palestine. Baidas also translated Russian novels written by Tolstoy, Checkov, Dostoevsky, Gorki, Lermontov, and Pushkin. Other authors who studied Russian at Russian schools are Iskandar al-Khouri al-Betjali, (1900-1973), Bandali al-Jowzi (1871-1944), who married a Russian, and the well-known Lebanese poets Amin al-Rihani (1876-1940) and Mikhael Naimi (1890-1902). [[20]](#footnote-20)

**The Arab scholars** who lived and taught in Russia also contributed to the language contacts. The ones who played a major role include the Egyptian Muhammad al-Tantawi (1810-1861), who taught Arabic language and literature at St Petersburg, the Syrian Murqus (1964 -1911), the Lebanese Qalzi (1819-1912), Fadlallah Sarrouf (1826-1903) and Ataya (1852-1924), and the Palestinian Kalthoum Odeh Vasilieva (1865 -1892). [[21]](#footnote-21)

**II. Arabic Borrowings from Russian in the Soviet Period (1917-1990)**

 In the 20th century, Russian Arabic Contact was reinforced and enhanced by political changes in both Russia and the Arab World. After the Second World War, the relationship between the Soviet Union and the Arab countries strengthened in all fields.

Just as Russian has borrowed Arabic words through European languages from the 15th century onwards, Arabic has also borrowed Russian words through European countries through various means of mass media . Here is a short list of Russian words that are commonly used in Arabic mass media. The words have been collected from *al-Ittihad* Arabic Newspaper, which has been published in Haifa since 1944.[[22]](#footnote-22)

| **ARABIC IN** **ENGLISH TRANSLITERATION**  | **IN ARABIC SCRIPT** |
| --- | --- |
| BALSHAFI  | BOLSHEVIK | **بلشفي** |
| BALSHAFIYYA  | BOLSHEVISM  | **بلشفيه** |
| COMONA  | COMMUNE | **كومونه** |
| (AL-) DOMA  | DUMA  | **دوما** |
| (AL-) GLASNOST | GLASNOST  | **غلاسنوست** |
| (AL-) KREMLIN | KREMLIN | **كرملين** |
| (AL) LENINIYYAH | LENINISM  | **اللينينيه** |
| (AL) MAMOOTH  | MAMMOUTH  | **الماموث** |
| (AL) MANEFESTO  | MANIFESTO | **المانيفسيتو** |
| (AL) MANSHAFI  | MENSHEVIK | **المنشفي** |
| MASKOBI | MOSCOVITE | **موسكوبي** |
| (AL-) MASKOBIYYEH | MASKOBIYYA | **المسكوبيه** |
| MIR | MIR  | **مير**  |
| MIG | MIG | **ميج**  |
| NOVOSTI | NOVOSTII | **نوفوستي** |
| (AL) PERISTROIKA  | PERESTROIKA  | **البيريسترويكا**  |
| (AL) POLITBURO  | PPLITBURO  | **البوليتبيرو**  |
| (AL) PROLITARIYA  | PROLITARIAT  | **البروليتاريا**  |
| (AL) SOFKHOZ  | SOFKHOZ | **السوفخوز**  |
| SOKHOY | SOKHOI  | **سوخوي**  |
| (AL) SOVIAT  | SOVIET | **سوفيات**  |
| (AL) SOVIATI  | SOVIET  | **سوفياتي**  |
| SOYOOZ | SOYUZ  | **سويوز**  |
| SPOTNIK | SPUTNIK  | **سبوتنيك**  |
| (AL) STALINIYYA  | STALINISM  | **ستالينيه**  |
| TASS | TASS | **تاس** |
| (AL) TROIKA  | TROIKA | **ترويكا** |

Besides the above words, Russian names of people have become a common and acceptable phenomenon. Many Arabic speakers have married Russians and they give their children Russian names like: Yuri, Leoned, Irina, Olga أولغا, Natashaناتاشا , Natalie ناتالي, Elena إلينا, Valentina فالنتينا, Gloria غلوريا, Katya كاتيا, Yulia يوليا and Marina مارينا.

**III. The Treatment of Russian-Arabic Contact in Dictionaries**

1. ***Russisches etymologisches Worterbuch*, by Max Vasmer** (1953-1958). [[23]](#footnote-23)

This is a three-volume German dictionary that deals with the etymology of Russian words. Vasmer gives a number of Russian words from Oriental languages without distinguishing between Turkic, Persian and Arabic. The following are Arabic words, which Vasmer considers as “Oriental,” and to which I added the Arabic equivalents:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **RUSSIAN** | **ENGLISH** | **ARABIC** |
| АЛКОРАН (AL-KORAN) | AL-KORAN | AL-KORAN | **القرآن**  |
| АРАБ (ARAB) | ARAB | ARAB | **عرب**  |
| ВЕСИР (BESIR) | PRISONER | ASIR | **أسير**  |
| ГАРЕМ (GAREM) | HAREM | HAREM  | **حريم**  |
| ДЕВАН (DIVAN) | DIVAN | DEWAN | **ديوان**  |
| ЕСЫРЬ (ECIR) | PRISONER OF WAR | ASIR | **أسير**  |
| ИМАМ (IMAM) | IMAM | IMAM | **إمام** |
| КАДИЙ (KADI) | CADI | CADI | **قاضي** |
| КЕНЖАЛ (KENJAL) | PONIARD | KHANJAR | **خنجر**  |
| КОРАН (KORAN) | KORAN | KORAN | **قرآن** |
| МИНАРИТ (MINARET) | MINARET | MANARAH | **مناره**  |
| МУФТИ (MUFTI) | MUFTI | MUFTI | **مفتي**  |

References to these words are found in Il’inskij’s translation of Dmitry Kantemir’s treatise on the Mohammedan religion. [[24]](#footnote-24)

**2. Ghara’ib al-Lugha al-Arabiyya / Oddities of Arabic, by al-Yasoo’i, Nakhleh Rafael,**  **1960[[25]](#footnote-25)**

This is the earliest and probably the only Arabic book (known to me) that deals with Russian borrowings from Arabic. However, it does not discuss the channels of such borrowing and does not point out the etymology of the borrowed words. The book gives 130 Russian words that come from Arabic. Al-Yasoo’i, gives the words as they are pronounced in Russian but in English transliteration. Here is a partial list of words given by al-Yasoo’i, to which I added the Russian transcription and Arabic equivalents and transliteration:

| **TRANSLITERATION** | **RUSSIAN** | **ENGLISH** | **ARABIC** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ABRIKOS  | АБРИКОС  | APRICOT | **برقوق** |
| ADMIRAL | АДМИРАЛ | ADMIRAL | **أمير البحر** |
| ALKOV | АЛКОВ | ALCOVE | **القبه** |
| ALKAGOL | АЛКОГОЛ | ALCOHOL | **الكحل** |
| ALKALI | АЛКАЛИ | ALKALI | **القالي** |
| ALKIMIA | АЛХИМЯА | ALCHEMY | **الكيميا** |
| AMBRA | АМБАР | AMBER | **عنبر/عمبر** |
| RSINAL | АРСЕНАЛ | ARSENAL  | **دار الصناعه** |
| AZIMOUT | ЗЕНЙТ  | AZIMUTH | **سمت** |
| CHAL’ | ШАЛЬ | SHAWL | **شال** |
| CHEUFRAN | ШАФРАН | SAFFRON | **زعفران** |
| DIVAN | ЛЕВАН | DIVAN | **ديوان** |
| DJIN | ДЖИН | JINN | **جن** |
| DRAGAMAN | ЭСТРАГОН  | DRAGOMAN | **ترجمان** |
| FAKIR | ФАКИР | FAKIR | **فقير** |
| GAZIEL’ | ГАЗЕЛЬ | GAZELLE | **غزال** |
| GIRAF | ЖИРАФ | GIRAFFE | **زرافه** |
| KAFE’ | КАФЁ | COFFEE | **قهوه** |
| KALIF | КАЛИФ | KHALIPHA | **خليفه** |
| KAMFARA | КАМФАРА | CAMPHOR | **كافور** |
| KERMES | ХУКМЕС | KERMES | **قرمز** |
| KHACHICH | ГАШИШ  | HASHISH | **حشيش** |
| LIMON | ЛИМОН | LIMON | **ليمون** |
| MAGAZIN | МАГАЗЙН | MAGAZINE | **مخزن** |
| MATRATS | МАТРАС | MMATTRESS | **مطرح** |
| MINARET | МИНАРЁТ | MINARET | **مناره** |
| MOUSLIN | МУЩЛИН  | MUSLIN | **موصلي** |
| NADIR | ЁНАДЙР | NADIR | **نظير** |
| OAZIS | ОАЗИС | OASE/ OASIS | **واحه** |
| PAMIRANITS | ОРАНЖЕВЫЙ  | ORANGE | **نارنج** |
| SAKHAR | САХАР | SUGAR | **سكر** |
| SANDAL | САНЛАЛИЯ | SANDAL | **صندل** |
| SIROPP | СИРУП | SYRUP | **شراب** |
| SOFA | СОФА  | SOFA | **صفّه** |
| SOUMAKH | СУМАК | SUMAC | **سماق** |
| TAL’K | ТАЛЬК  | TALC | **طلق** |
| TARIF | ТАРЙФ | TARIFF | **تعريف/تعرفه** |
| TSIFRA | ШИФР | CIPHER | **صفر** |
| ZENIT | ЗЕНЙТ | ZENITH | **سمت** |

**3. *Foreign Words in Russian: A Historical Sketch, 1550-1880,*** byGerta Huttle-Worth, 1963. [[26]](#footnote-26)

This is an English-English dictionary that deals with the historical development of Russian and traces the etymological development of Russian borrowed words. Surprisingly, Gerta Huttle-Worth classifies the Arabic, Persian and Turkic words as “Oriental” without making any distinctions. Even the words “Mohammad, Islam, Koran, Ramadan” are “Oriental words” according to her criteria. Probably, she does not specify that they are Arabic because of her ignorance of the language or like Vasmer, she uses the word “Oriental” as a super-ordinate term to refer to Arabic. Gerta traces the sources of the words and refers the reader to them.

Here is a partial list of the words she gives in Russian and English, to which I added the Arabic equivalents.Most of the words are Arabic in origin. Russian has borrowed some of them directly, and others through European languages.

| **RUSSIAN** | **ENGLISH** | **ARABIC** | **ARABIC** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| АЛМИРАЛ | ADMIRAL | AMIR AL-BAHR | **أمير البحر**  |
| АЛКОВ | ALCOVE | AL-KOBA | **القبه**  |
| АТЛАС | ATLAS | ATLAS | **أطلس** |
| БАЛСАМ | BALSAM | BALSAM | **بلسم** |
| ВИЗИРЬ | VIZIER | WAZIR | **وزير** |
| ГАРЕМ | HAREM | HAREM | **حريم**  |
| ГИТАРА | GUITAR | QITHARA | **قيثاره** |
| ЕСЫР | PRISONER | ASIR  | **أسير** |
| КАДЙ | JUDGE | CADI | **قاضي** |
| КЕНЖАЛ | PONIARD | KHANJAR | **خنجر**  |
| КОРСАН | PIRATE | QORSAN  |  **قرصان**  |
| КОФЕ | COFFEE | QAHWA | **قهوه**  |
| МАСКАРАД | MASQUERADE | MASKHARA | **مسخره**  |
| МИНАРЕТ | MINARET | MANARA | **مناره** |
| МУМИЯ | MUMMY | MUMIA’A | **مومياء** |
| МУСУЛМАНИН | MUSLIMS | MUSLIMUN | **مسلمون** |
| НЕФТЬ |  | NAPHT | **نفط** |
| СИРУП | SYRUP | SHARAB | **شراب** |
| СОФИСТ | SOPHIST | SOPHI | **صوفي** |
| СОФА | SOFA | SOFA | **صوفا/ صفّه**  |
| ХАЛАТ | DRESSING GOWN | KHALAT | **خلعة**  |
| ШАЛ | SHAWL | SHAL | **شال**  |
| ШЕРВЕТ | SHERBET | SHARBAT | **شربات**  |
| ЩЕРИФ | SHERIFF  | SHARIFF | **شريف** |
| ЯСЫР | PRISONER  | ASIR | **أسير**  |

4. ***Sharbatov Qamus Russi Arabi Madrasi,* by Gregory Sharbatov** (1964). [[27]](#footnote-27)

This is the earliest Russian Arabic learner’s dictionary (known to me) that refers to Russian contact with Arabic and borrowing from it. In the introduction, Sharbatov gives the following words with their Arabic equivalents, but he gives no etymological information:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **RUSSIAN** | **ENGLISH** | **ARABIC** |  |
| АЛГЕБРАБ  | ALGEBRA  | AL-JABR  | **الجبر**  |
| КАЗНАБ  | TREASURY | KHAZNA | **خزنه**  |
| ВИЭЙРЬ | VIZIER | WAZIR | **وزير** |
| АРАБ | RAB | ARAB | **وزير** |
| ФЕЛЛАХ | FELLAH | FALLAH | **فلاح** |
| ИСЛАМ | ISLAM | ISLAM | **إسلام** |
| КОРАН | KORAN | KORAN | **قرآن** |
| МЕЧЕТ | MOSQUE | MASJID | **مسجد** |

5. ***Russian Etymological Dictionary***, **by Terence Wade (1996).** [[28]](#footnote-28)

This English dictionary gives an illuminating introduction about the evolution and development of Russian and all its branches. Regarding Russian borrowing from Arabic, he says that Arabic words, which had already been borrowed by European languages such as Latin, Spanish, Italian, French, German and English, entered Russian indirectly. Terence’s dictionary describes the routes through which the following words found their way into Russian.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **RUSSIAN**  | **ENGLISH**  | **ARABIC** | **ARABIC** |
| АЬРИКОС (ABRIKOS) | APRICOT  | AL-BARQUQ | **برقوق** |
| АЛМАЗ (ALMAZ)  | DIAMOND  | ALMAS/ALMAZ | **ألماز** |
| АМБАР( AMBAR)  | BARN  | AMBAR | **عمبر**  |
| АТЛАС (ATLAS)  | SATIN  | ATLAS | **أطلس**  |
| БАКЛАЗАЖАН (BAKLAZAN)  | AUBERGINE | BADINJAN | **باذنجان**  |
| ГАЗ (GAZ)  | GAUZE | GAZA | **غزه**  |
| ДИВАН (DIVAN) | DIVAN | DIWAN | **ديوان**  |
| ЗЕНИТ (ZENIT) | ZENITH | SAMT | **سمت**   |
| КАЗНА (KAZNA)  | TREASURY | KHAZNA | **خزنه**  |
| КОФЕ (KOFE) | COFFEE | QAHWAH | **قهوه**  |
| МАТРАС (MATRAS) | MATTRESS | AL-MATRAH | **مطرح**  |
| НЕФТЬ (NEFT) | OIL | NAFTT | **نفط**  |
| ОРАНЖЕВЫЙ (ORANJEVYJ) | ORANGE | NARANJ | **نارنج**  |
| ПОПУГАЙ (POPUGAJ) | PARROT | BABBAGHA | **ببغاء**  |
| САХАР (SACHAR)  | SUGAR | SUKKAR | **سكّـ**ر  |
| СУНДУК (SUNDUK) | TRUNK/ CHEST | SANDUQ | **صندوق**  |
| ТОРГОВЛЯ (TORGOVLIA)  | TRADE | TIJARA | **تجاره**  |
| ЧЕРДАК(CERDAK) | ATTIC | CERADIQ | **سرادق**  |
| ШАХМАТЫ (SACHMATY) | CHESS | SHAH MAT | **شاه مات**/ **شطرنج** |

***6. Pocket Oxford Russian Dictionary: Russian-Englisn/ English-Russian*, by Jessie Coulson, Nigel Rankin and Della Thompson, (2000). [[29]](#footnote-29)**

The following items have been compiled from three English Arabic etymological dictionaries: Cannon,[[30]](#footnote-30) Salloum,[[31]](#footnote-31) and al-Basha.[[32]](#footnote-32) They confirm that the words are originally Arabic borrowed by English. I tested if they also exist as Russian words in *Oxford Russian Dictionary* (2000). To my surprise, I found out that they are also given as Russian words. However, since the dictionary is a general purpose dictionary, it does give not etymological explanations.[[33]](#footnote-33) Here is a list of samples with the Arabic equivalents:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **ENGLISH** | **RUSSIAN** | **ARABIC SCRIPT ARABIC**  |
| ADMIRAL  | АДМИРАЛ  | AMIR ALBAHR | **أمير البحر** |
| ALCOHOL  | АЛКОГОЛЬ  | ALKOHOL | **الكحول، الكحل** |
| ALGEBRA  | АЛГЕЬРА  | AL-JABR | **الجبر**  |
| AMBER  | АМБРА  | ANBER | **عنبر**  |
| ARSENAL  | АРСЕНАЛ  | DAR AL-SINA’AH | **دار الصناعة**  |
| BALSAM  | БАЛЬЗАМ  | BALSAM  | **بلسم**  |
| CAFÉ  | КАФЕ  | QAHWA  | **قهوه**  |
| CAMPHOR  | КАМФОРА | KAFOOR  | **كافور** |
| CANON  | КАНОН  | QANOON | **قانون**  |
| CHESS  | ШАХМАТ  | SHAH MAT | **شاه مات**  |
| CIPHER  | СИФР  | SIFR  | **صفر** |
| CLIMATE  | КЛЙМАТ  | IQLIM | **إقليم**  |
| DIVAN  | ДИВАН  | DIWAN | **ديوان**  |
| LOGARITHM  | ЛОГАРИФМ  | AL-KHAWARIZMI | **الخوارزمي** |
| MAGAZINE  | МАГАЗИ  | MAKHZAN/ MAKHAZIN | **مخزن** |
| MINARET  | МИНАРЕТ  | MANARAH | **مناره**  |
| MONSOON  | МУССОН  | MAWSIM | **موسم** |
| MUMMY  | МУМИЯ  | MUMYA**’** | **مومياء** |
| MUSK  | МУСКУС  | MISK | **مسك** |
| MUSLIN  | МУШЛИН  | MUSILI | **موصلي** |
| MYRRH  | МИРРА  | MURR | **مُر** |
| NADIR  | НАДЙР  | NADHIR | **نظير** |
| OPIUM  | ОПИУМ  | AFIOON | **أفيون**  |
| ORANGE  | ОРАНЖЕВЫЙ  | NARANJ | **نارنج**  |
| SAFFRON  | ШАФРАН  | ZA’AFARAN | **زعفران** |
| SATEEN  | САТИН  | SATAN | **ستان** |
| SESAME  | СЕЗАМ  | SOMSOM | **سمسم** |
| SHAWL  | ШАЛЬ  | SHAAL | **شال** |
| SHERBET  | ШЕРБЕТ  | SHARAB / SHARBAT | **شراب، شربات**  |
| SHERIFF  | ШЕРЙФ  | SHARIF | **شريف** |
| SUGAR  | САХАР  | SUKKAR  | **سكر**  |
| SYRUP  | СИРУП  | SHARAB | **شراب**  |
| TARIFF  | ТАРЙФ  | TA’RIFA | **تعرفه** |
| ZENITH  | ЗЕНЙТ  | SAMT | **سمت**  |
| ZEPHYR  | ЗЕФЙР  | ZAFIR | **زفير** |

**IV. CONCLUSION**

This brief study shows that Russian and Arabic have been in contact for more than a thousand years now. This contact has taken place directly or indirectly through Oriental, or East and West Slavic, and through many European languages. This process started in the seventh century and has not stopped yet.

Interaction between the two languages took place through various cultural, commercial, scientific, military, political, religious, and media channels. From the 15th century onward, this interaction intensified thanks to the movement of Orientalism and scientific development and relation between Europe and Russia and the Arab world. Scholars, poets, authors, and travelers came into contact with the Arab culture, language and literature. The missionary activity and religious associations also contributed to the bidirectional relations between the two languages. Translations of the Russian and Soviet literature brought the two languages closer to each other. Teaching Arabic in Russia and Russian in some Arab countries also made the two languages familiar despite the differences in orthography, pronunciation and grammatical structures.

In the twentieth century, borrowing has reversed its direction, and Arabic started borrowing Russian terms and words from all fields of life. Arabic speakers have “Arabized” the Russian words phonologically, and syntactically and adapted many words to the Arabic rules of grammar and word formation, especially by adding the definite article prefix “al-“.

To sum up, despite its significance as a cultural phenomenon, this aspect has not been dealt with sufficiently over the centuries and only in the early fifties of the 20th century did lexicographers start dealing with the etymology of Russian. Despite the occasional references to Russian Arabic interaction, I dare say that this study is the first of its kind in this field. I hope more studies will follow.

1. Lecturer in the Academic Arab College for Education - Haifa [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Terence. Wade (1996) *Russian Etymological Dictionary*. Bristol Classical Press. P. 6 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For the division of the periods of development of Russian language, I depend on the article “History of the English language” in *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia , Online*; and *The History of the Russian Literary Language from the Seventeenth Century to the Nineteenth,* by Vinogradov, with an introduction by Lawrence Thomas. The University of Wisconsin Press. Madison, Milwaukee, and London, 1969. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibn Fadlan, Ahmad is an Arab geographer and traveler who was sent by the Abbassid Caliph in Baghdad al-Muqtadir to the lands of the Saqaliba (Slavs) in the 10th century (921 – 924). He wrote a description of his visits to the lands of the Turks, the Khazar, Saqaliba, Russia and Scandinavia in a manuscript that was found in Mshhad /Tous in Iran in 1924 and published in 1959 in Damascus, and translated into German in 1939 and into English by Michael Crichton in 1984/88. It was recompiled, edited and translated by Haidar Muhammad Ghayba in 1996 and published by al-Sharika al-‘Alamiyya Lil-Kitab. Beirut, Lebanon. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Crichton, Michael (1988). *Eaters of the Dead*: With an Introduction and Running Commentary Read by Michael Crichton. Mass Market. It was recorded on a videocassette by Random House, 1998. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ghayba, Muhammad Haidar (ed.), *Risalat Ibn Fadlan* al-Sharika al-Alamiyya Lil-Kitab, 1996. P. 75, Note 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Wilson, C.W. (1988). *The Pilgrimage of the Russian Abbot Daniel in the Holy Land 1106-1107 A.D.* London. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Abbott Daniel’s description of his pilgrimage to Palestine was translated into German and French and was edited by Norov and published in St Petersburg in 1863. For more information, see the Introduction in Wilson (1988) and the Introduction of *Wasf al-Ard al-Muqaddasa fi Falastin 110-1107* by, *al-Haj al-Rusi Daniel al-Rahib*. Translated into Arabic and with a comment by Said al-Bishawi, and Ismael Abu Hadiyyeh. Amman, Jordan. Dar al-Shuruq Li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi’. 2003.

 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Mahamid, Omar (1993). *Falastin fi Adab al-Rahhala al-Rus,* al-Markiz al-Arabi Li al-Dirasat al-Rusiyya. Um al-Fahim. PP. 40-48 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Huttle-Worth, Gerta (1963). *Foreign Words in Russian: A Historical Sketch, 1550-1880.* University of California Publications in Linguistics. Volume xxviii. P. 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Bikkinin, Irek “Turkic Borrowings in English” in http//www.ece.lsu.edu/kak/ary2pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Mahamid, Omar (2001). *Kalthoum Odeh: From Nazareth to St. Petersburg.* Dar al-Huda. The author gives a detailed description of the cultural relationships between Russian and Arab scholars, writers and poets and their effect on the Russian and Arab literature. See pages 1-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Mahamid, Omar (1993). P. 52-96. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Mahamid, Omar (2004). *Dirasat fi al-Hadhara al-Arabiyya al-Islamiyaa wa’l Istishraaq*, Bet Berl. P. 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. See Mahamid, Omar (2004). P. 97-98. about Bunin’s Complete Works (1956). Moscow, 1956. P. 365-366. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Mahamid, Omar (1988). *Safahat min Tarikh Madaris al-Jam’iyya al-Rusiyya-al-Falastiniyya fi Falastin between 1882-1914.* Markiz Ihya’a al-Turath al-‘Arabi*.* Taibeh., P. 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Mahamid, (1993), P. 103 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. For a detailed description of Kalthoum Odeh’s life and works, See Mahamid , Omar. (2001), P. 1-52. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Mahamid, Omar (1988), P. 47 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Ibid., P. 91, 108, 123, 133, 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Mahamid, Omar (2004),Vol. 1. P. 85-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *Itiihad Newspaper*. Published in Haifa, since 1994. Issues examined: 1950-1990. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Vasmer, Max, *Russisches etymologisches Worterbuch.* Vols. I-III. Heidelberg, 1953-1958. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See Huttle-Worth, Gerta (1963), P. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Al-Yasoo’i, Raphael Nakhleh, (1960). *Ghara’ib al-Lugha al-‘Arabiyya.* Al-Matba’a al-Katholikiyya. Beirut. P. 132-140 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Huttle-Worth, Gerta (1963)*. Historical Sketch, 1550-1880.* University of California Publications in Linguistics, Volume, xxviii. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. *РУССКО-АРАБСКИЙ УЧБНЫЙ СЛОВАРЬ / QAMUS RUSI ARABI MADRASI*, BY Gregory Sharbatov. Published by *Soviet Encyclopedia*, 1964. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Wade, Terence (1996). *Russian Etymological Dictionary.* By Terence Wade. Bristol Classical Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. *Pocket Oxford Russian Dictionary,* (2000)*.*  Second Edition. Russian-English, Compiled by Jessie Coulson. English Russian, Compiled by Nigel Ranking and Della Thompson. Oxford University Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Cannon, Garland and Kaye, S. (1994). *The Arabic Contributions to the English Language: an Historical Dictionary.*Published by: Wiesbadden: Harrassovitz Verlag. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Salloum, Habib and Peters, James (1994). *Arabic Contributions to the English Language. English Words of Arabic Origin: Etymology and History*. Libraire du Liban Publishers. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. al-Basha, Iffat *Mu’jam al-Alfaz al-Ingliziyya min Asl Arabi,* (2000), Beirut. Lebanon. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. For more information about Russian borrowing from European languages, see: *The Russian Language since the Revolution* by Bernard Comrie and Gerald Stone. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978; and *The Russian Language in the Twentieth Century*, by Bernard Comrie, Gerald Stone and Maria Polinsky. Oxford. Clarendon Press, 1996. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)