

Geographical and Political Background of Medieval Nomads Settling in the Steppes of Eastern Europe¹

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Beginning in the middle of the first millennium (the period of the Great Migration), the steppes of Eastern Europe became a territory subject to the periodic penetration of nomadic Turkic tribes of Central Asian origin. The Huns, the Avars, the Khazars and the Bulgars, conquering the western part of the Great Belt of the Eurasian steppes, created their own states and gradually dissolved into an ethnic array of tribes subjugated by them. Later came the Pechenegs, the Oguzes, the Kypchaks/Cumans/Polovetses, who although did not manage to create their own states made a noticeable impact on the ethnic and political history of Eastern Europe.

The modern climate of the steppes of Eastern Europe becomes softer from east to west. The steppes located to the east of the Volga are closer to the harsh steppes of the Asian part of the Great Belt of the Eurasian steppes. In physical-geographical terms the steppes to the east of the Volga and the Southern Urals region are a huge monotonous plain with an area of 750,500 square kilometers lowering from east to west, with a drop of altitude from 400 meters in the eastern part to 50 meters in the southwest (the Caspian Lowland). The land is gently undulating, with ridged ravines and the riverbeds of the steppe rivers. It has a distinct continental climate, arid and low in rainfall. Vegetation is herb-fescue-feather; shrub and tree vegetation is found mainly in the floodplains of the major rivers – the Volga and the Ural. There are also floodplain meadows rich in herbs. Much of the area is occupied by salt-marsh and solonchic soil.² In contrast, the climate of the steppes located to the west of the Don and the Azov Sea, though

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² F. N. Milkov, "Obshaja harakteristika prirody Chkalovskoy oblasti." *Ocherki fizicheskoi geografii Chkalovskoy oblasti*. Chkalov 1951, 22.

still continental, is mitigated by the impact of the Atlantic cyclones; with greater humidity and more varied and rich vegetation.³

Such is the climatic situation in the steppes of Eastern Europe today, and in fact, it was the same a thousand years ago, at the beginning of the second millennium. The results of paleo-agrological analyses obtained from the archeological sites of the Middle Ages on the territory of the southern Trans-Urals (the Arkaim Reserve), Orenburg region (the Kargalinsky mine, Pokrovsky, the Mustaevsy mounds), Samarskaya Luka, Mordovia (the Lyadinsky burial, tenth-twelfth century), in the Lower Volga region (the burial mounds of Olkhovka, Gusevka, Plemhoz Nedostupov, Petruninsky, Kostarevo, Avilovsky, Abganerovsky, Aksay, Malyaevka, Kolobovka and others) show that there have not been abrupt landscape (or presumably climatic) changes in the region for the last two or two and a half millennia.⁴ Therefore, the landscape situation that we can see now, and which is fixed on the available maps, without taking into account the human impact of the last two centuries, was also characteristic of the period we are interested in, that is, the first millennium and the first half of the second millennium.

However, describing the period of medieval development (eleventh-fourteenth centuries), soil scientists have noted the change from dry (similar to modern) soil conditions to more humid conditions. According to them, this period was characterized by the moistening of the climate, with a notable evolutionary transformation of the soil, accompanied by a very substantial improvement in its quality and increased natural fertility. The average annual precipitation was higher than at the present time, moist steppe began to extend to the south, and the semi-desert turned into dry steppe. There came the period of the "Medieval Climatic Optimum" which peaked in the thirteenth century, and which at the end of the fourteenth century was replaced by a period of a regular arid climate continuing up to the present day.⁵

³ <http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/es/90726/УКРАИНСКИЙ>.

⁴ I. M. Batanina, „Prirodnye osobennosti 'strany gorodov'." *Arkaim. Po stranicam drevnei istorii Juzhnogo Urala* Cheljabinsk 2004, 155; M. I. Martines-Navarrete, H. M. Visent-Garsia, P. Lopes-Garsia, H.A. Lopes-Saec, I. de Zavala-Morenkos, P. Dias-del-Rio, "Metallurgicheskoe proizvodstvo na Kargalah I rekonstrukcija okružhajushei sredy." *Rossiiskaja archeology* 4 (2005), 91; T.V. Tezikova, „Samarskaja Luka. Kratkaja fizico-geograficheskaja harakteristika vostochnoi chaste." *Samarskaja Luka v drevnosti. Kraevedcheskie zapiski. Vypusk III.* Kuibyshev 1975; O. S. Hohlova, „Morfologo-genetichesky analiz chronorjadov pochv kurgannyh grupp Pokrovka 1, 2 i 10 v 1995 godu." *Kurgany levoberezhnogo Iлека*, Vyp. 4. Moscow 1996, 66; A. A. Hohlov, O. S. Hohlova, „Paleopochvennye issledovanija kurgannogo mogilnika Mustaevo V v Novosergievskom raione Orenburgskoi oblasti." *Archeologicheskie pamjatniki Orenburzhia*. Vypusk VII. Orenburg 2005, 58; R. F. Voronina, *Ljadinskie drevnosti. Iz istorii mordvy-mokshi. Konec IX-nachalo XI veka*. Prilozhenie 2. Moscow 2007; V. A. Demkin, T. S. Demkina, A. V. Borisov, A. S. Jakimov, I. V. Sergackov, "Izmenenie pochv i prirognyh uslovii polupustynnogo Zavolzhia za poslednie 4000 let." *Pochvovotdenie* 3 (2004).

⁵ A. S. Jakimov, *Paleopochvy i prirodnye uslovija stepei Nizhnego Povolzhia v epohu srednevekovia (VIII-XIV vv. n.e.)*. Avtoreferat diss. kand. geogr. nauk. Moscow 2004; V.

The geography of monuments of the Oguz, Pecheneg, Polovets-Kypchak and the Golden Horde nomads currently identified in the steppes of Eastern Europe shows that the ranges of these tribal nomads were formed in close connection with the natural and climatic conditions of the landscape zone of their habitat – the steppes (or under their influence). At present in the steppes of Eastern Europe, from the South Urals (Mugodzhara mountain) to the Dniester river and the Lower Danube, we have accounted for 514 burials of the Oguz-Pecheneg era (tenth–eleventh centuries). They are located as follows (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

TABLE 1.
The distribution statistics of nomad burials in the steppes of Eastern Europe (%)

Region	Oguz and Pecheneg	Kypchak/Polovets	The Golden Horde
Ural and Volga regions	32.1	13.3	63.2
The Volga-Don interfluve	13.6	15.1	9.8
The Don	15.3	15.4	6.9
The Ukraine	39.0	56.2	19.1
Total number of burials	514	383	720

Among the 514, there are 114 burials characterized by the following features:

- Burial of horse skin over a person, inside the grave or on a wooden floor (Figure 2);
- Presence of a *reshma* plaque, the main decoration of a horse-bridle headband, among the accompanying accessories;
- Presence of bird-like amulet pendants and *kopoushki* pendants in the decoration of female costume (Figure 3, 1–6, 14–16).

These features, according to the firm opinion of the majority of modern researchers of nomadic medieval monuments, characterize the Oguz funeral rite. Just over half (58%) of the burials with similar characteristics are located in the steppes of the southern Urals and Trans-Volga region and thus are naturally combined with the data of oriental authors of the tenth century. Ahmad ibn Fadlan (922) passed the territory of Oguz nomads at the northern slopes of Ust-yurt. His contemporary, al-Istakhri, placed “the boundaries of the Oguz country” to the west of Maverannah (between the Syr-Darya and the Amu-Darya), between the Khazars and Kimaks, the country of the Karluks and the Bulgars and the borders of Muslim countries from Jurjan to Farab and Isbidzhab. On the modern map this is quite a large area, from the upper Syr-Darya in the east to the northern Caspian Sea and the Lower Volga in the west. The same borders of the

A. Demkin, M. I. Dergacheva, A. V. Borisov, J. G. Ryskov, Oleinik S. A., “Evoljucija pochv i izmenenie klimata vostochnoeuropejskoj polupustyni v pozdnem golocene.” *Pochvovedenie* 2 (1998), 148–157; V. A. Demkin, A. V. Borisov, T. S. Demkina, T. E. Homutova, B. N. Zolotareva, N. N. Kashirskaja, S. N. Udalcov, M. V. Elcov, *Volgo-Donskie stepi i drevnosti b srednevekovie*. Pushino 2010, 83.

Oguz settlements are also mentioned by Ibn Hawkal (in the 970s). The Arab writers considered the Volga (the Itil, the Atil, the Khazar river) to be the western boundary of Oguz settlement in the tenth century. Thus, the works of al-Masudi († 956) testify to the fact that the Guz roamed the North Caspian region, between the mouths of two large rivers flowing into the Caspian (Khazar) Sea. According to al-Masudi, these are the Black Irtysh and the White Irtysh, actually corresponding to the Yaik (the Ural) and the Emba.⁶

A second group of burials containing the remains of a horse skin dating from the tenth century to the first half of the eleventh century in the steppes of Eastern Europe are represented by burials in which a horse's skull and leg bones lie on the left or right side of the human skeleton and on the same level (Figure 4). In total, we have accounted for 201 such burials (169 burials with horse bones on the left, 32 on the right). Their geography is inversely proportional to the geography of Oguz burials: 21.4% are located in the steppes of the Ural-Volga region. To the west of the Volga the frequency of occurrence of these graves increases: among 78.6% of the remaining burials, 12.9% were found in the steppes of the Volga-Don interfluvium, 15.4% in the Lower Don region, and 48.2% in the territory of modern Ukraine up to the Dniester in the west (Figure 1).

These territories, according to written sources, from the end of the ninth up to the middle of the eleventh century were the main area of the Pechenegs' settlement in the steppes of Eastern Europe. This was a consequence of the Oguz-Pecheneg wars at the end of the ninth century which were fought for possession of the steppes of the Trans-Volga and the Aral Sea region (according to al-Masudi and Constantine Porphyrogenitus).⁷ The geographical distribution statistics of the Pecheneg burials to the west of the Volga River shows that much more rarely (12.9% of the total number of burials) they are found in the steppes between the Volga and the Don rivers, including the North Caucasus, that is, on the territory that in the first half of the tenth century pertained to the Khazar Kaganate. These data clearly explain the nature of the formation of "the Pecheneg oecumene" in the steppes of Eastern Europe: being expelled from the steppes of the Lower Trans-Volga and the Aral Sea region by the Oguz, who joined a military alliance with the Khazars, the Pechenegs

"fled and wandered round casting about for a place for their settlement; and when they reached the land which they now possess and found the Turks⁸ living in it, they defeated them in battle and expelled and cast them out, and settled in it, and have been masters of this country, as has been said, for fiftyfive years to this day."⁹

⁶ Materialy po istorii..., 1939, 166.

⁷ A. V. Garkavi, *Skazanija musulmanskih pisatelei o slavjanah I russah*. Sankt-Petersburg 1870, 127; Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*. ed. Gy. Moravcsik, English transl. R. J. H. Jenkins. Budapest 1949.

⁸ Here by "the Turks" the Magyars are meant.

⁹ Constantine, *DAI*, 167.

This circumstance – the expulsion of the Pechenegs from the east of the Volga and the Aral Sea region – was turned to their advantage. After leaving for the west, the Pechenegs found themselves in more favorable climatic conditions, since they now occupied the bunch-grass steppe typical of the south of Eastern Europe with a milder climate and denser hydrological system. Another consequence of the Pechenegs' incursion into Eastern Europe was the ancient Magyars' conquest of their new homeland in the Carpathian-Danube basin, which happened due to the Pechenegs forcing them out of the basin of the Don and the Dnieper (the area of Levedia and Etelköz).

The Pechenegs' adversaries – the Oguz – were forced onto the dry and saline Volga-Ural steppes and semi-deserts. Obviously, it was the insufficient environmental capacity of the steppes east of the Volga and the Transural region that pushed the Oguzes to endless attacks on their former allies – the Khazars (al-Masudi) and the Muslim regions of Maverannah (Hudud al-Alam).¹⁰

The geographical statistics of monuments of the next, Kypchak-Polovtsian stage in the history of the nomads of Eastern Europe (second half of the eleventh to first half of the thirteenth century) shows that the Sary-Kypchaks (the Polovtsy/Cumans) in their movement to the west did not consider the steppe of the Ural-Caspian and the Volga region as the object of their expansion (see Table 1).

Like the Pechenegs, the Sary-Kypchaks migrated to the steppes of Eastern Europe because of the wars that happened in the steppes of Central Asia in the first half of the eleventh century. Retreating under pressure from the Khitans, a large group of Turkic tribes – the Cumans and the Kais – moved to western Siberia, northern Djungaria and north-east of the Seven Rivers. There they mingled with another group of Turkic tribes – the Sarys and the Basmyls. After being defeated in wars with the Karluks, the Cumans, the Kais, the Sarys and the Basmyls moved further to the west, and somewhere in the steppes between the southern Urals and the northern Aral region they faced the Cumans and the Shary-Polovtsy.¹¹ This conglomeration of nomadic Turkic tribes, in which the political leadership was soon transferred to the Kypchaks, moved further to the west, and in the middle of the eleventh century it dominated the steppes to the west of the Volga River (Figure 5).

The hallmarks of a funeral ceremony of the Kypchaks/Polovtsy (see Table 1) are: burial under an earthen mound (88.8%), with one burial in a mound (90%); half of these are "inlets" into the mound (54.2%); the burial pit is simple (50%); in 10% of burials a hardwood floor on grist graves was recorded; in 27% of burials the grave pit design is not established (usually in the inlet ones in the earlier mounds). In total, 52.5% of burials are accompanied by the remains of horse burial. Of these, 39% are the remnants of a horse (skull and leg bones). In 17% of the burials, a horse skin was placed on the left of the human body, in 9% of the burials on the right), and 13.5% contain a skeleton of a horse (8.1% to the left of a hu-

¹⁰ V. Minorsky, *Hudūd al-‘Ālam. The regions of the World*. London 1937, 100–101.

¹¹ S. G. Klyashtorny, "Kimaky, kypchaky i polovtscy." *Istoriya tatar s drevneishih vremen*. Vol. 1. *Narody Stepnoi Eurazii v drevnosti*. Kazan 2002, 346.

man; 2.5% to the right, and 2% on the steps) (Figure 6). Parts of a harness (stirrups and bits), but without the horse, were found in 9.9% of burials.

The predominant orientation of the buried is western (33.7%) or eastern (21%). The orientation for other azimuths ranged from 8.6% to the north-east down to 1.2% to the south.¹² In 21% of burials the remains of plank coffins are recorded, and in 10.6% there were clay stucco pots.

Roaming the steppes of the Lower Don Basin and the Dnieper, the Kypchaks/Polovtsy drop out of sight of oriental authors, and therefore the main source of information about them until the middle of the thirteenth century comes from Russian chronicles. It is likely that the reason for the Sary-Kypchaks/Polovtsy choosing the mentioned areas as the main territory of their settlement in Eastern Europe is not only the low ecological potential of the steppes of the Ural-Volga region, but also the extreme ethno-political situation in the east of the Great Belt of the Eurasian steppes in the first half of the eleventh century, as was mentioned above.

Moving to the west, the grouping of the Cumans-Sary-Kypchaks attacked the Oguz, who as we have seen were nomads in the Aral Sea and the Volga River region, and forced them to go beyond the Volga. However, as noted above, the steppes of the Ural-Volga region were not attractive to the Sary-Kypchak tribes, and they continued to harass the Oguz until they and the Pechenegs were expelled from the steppes of the northern Black Sea and the Azov Sea. Thus, the steppes of the Volga and the Ural regions became the eastern and little-populated periphery of the Dasht-i-Kypchak or "Polovtsian field" (Figure 5). This, in addition to the geography of the Kypchak/Polovtsian burials in Eastern Europe, is proved by the geography of the Polovtsian stone statues that were a characteristic feature of the Kypchak-Polovtsian culture of the twelfth-early thirteenth centuries: the great majority are located between the rivers Don, Seversky Donets and Dnieper.¹³

The geographical statistics of nomadic monuments of the Golden Horde (the second half of the thirteenth to the fourteenth century) present a completely different picture. The bulk of the currently known burials of nomads in the steppes of Eastern Europe of the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries are concentrated in the Lower Volga and Southern Urals (Table 1, Figure 7).

The overall characteristics of the nomadic funeral rite in the Golden Horde epoch are expressed in the following traits: burial under an earthen mound (79.7%), containing, as a rule, one burial (90.1% of all the burials studied are single in a mound). Other types of over-grave construction occur much less frequently: 10.46% of the burials are found under stones thrown and lined over the grave; 2.5% under a mound of rock and earth; 2.7% inside a circular or rectangular stone fence; 2.4% under an earthen mound, lined by top rock ("stone armor"); slightly fewer (2.08%) under a mound in the form of a heap of stones; 4.3% of burials are from moundless (ground) cemeteries; 2.4% of the burials occurred

¹² The orientation of 12.7% of the burials could not be identified.

¹³ S. A. Pletneva, "Donskie polovtsy." *Slovo o polku Igoreve i ego vremja*. Moscow 1985, 252.

within a fence of raw brick; 0.7% of the burials were inside the stone fence, covered with an earthen mound (Figure 9). The type of an over-grave construction has not been defined (destroyed during the excavation, not fixed) in 3.4% of the burials. Most frequently (12.4% of the burials) in over-grave mounds animal bones – the remains of a memorial funeral feast – are found, and 7.7% of the burials were made under earthen mounds, belted with a small trench at the base. About the same number of burials were committed under mounds that contain some wooden structures (1.9%), fire-pits (3.2%) or pieces of coal (2.2%), and pottery fragments (2.6%).

As was mentioned above, most of the burials studied are single, and within the investigated mound. However, occasionally (6.5%) the burial had been "let" into an earlier mound, and pair burials occur a little more frequently (9.9%).¹⁴

The construction of the burial pit is generally extremely simple: a rectangular or oval-shaped hole with vertical walls and flat bottom (65.6% of the burials). Graves of complicated structure are less frequent: with steps along the long walls (6.6% of the burials); with a step to the left of the deceased (5.7%); recessed (niche) with a step/ledge in front of the recess (5.2%); recessed (niche), but without a step/ledge at the entrance to the recess (3.2%); with step/ledge along all four walls (2.2%); with a step to the right of the deceased (1.3%).

In nearly one-third of the graves studied (31.1%) the remnants of wooden floors (coverings) made of planks, scaffolding or poles were found. In 20.4% of these burials the floors lay on the filling of the grave pit. In 5.4% of the burials the floors were based on a step/shoulder, in 3% of the burials the recess was covered, and in 2.3% the covering was based on a step. Graves whose walls were lined with stone (1.4%) or filled with stones (1.1%) occur sporadically.

A significant part of the Golden Horde nomadic burials (39.5%) can be interpreted as equestrian, since they contain the remains of horse skulls and leg bones (10.1%), the whole horse skeleton (8%), or harness but without a horse (21.4%). Among the first, in 5.0% of the burials the horse bones lay to the left of the human skeleton, in 2.2% of the burials the bones of a horse were found in the grist of the grave above a man, in 1.04% – to the right of a man, in 0.8% – above a man, but on the covering. Among the second in 3.5% of the burials a horse skeleton was located on the left of a man, in 2.3% – on a step and in 2.3% – in a separate pit. It should be noted that in cases where the orientation of the horse is fixed, it corresponds to the orientation of the human skeleton (12.3%). In the tombs equipped only with a harness the latter was located either at the head or the feet of the deceased.

The predominant orientation of the burials is western (43.7%) and north-eastern (10.9%). Then follow the orientation to the south-west (9.4%), north-west (9.2%), east (6.6%), north (6.5%), south (2.2%) and south-east (1.3%). In 9.5% of the burials the orientation is not defined.

The most common position of the deceased is stretched on his or her back (89.3%) with hands outstretched over the body (71.7%). More than 17% of the de-

¹⁴ Here two burials under one mound is meant.

ceased are laid in the grave with arm/s bent at the elbow and the hand/s resting on the pelvis: 6.9% have both arms bent, 5.2% the right arm bent, and 5.0% the left arm bent.

About one-third of the burials investigated had additional constructions inside the graves, such as a plank coffin (23.7%), a wooden deck (7.9%) or a framework of planks (1.95%), and 7.5% of the buried lay on the bast (96.1%) or grass (1.4%) litter.

Some of the burials (17.9%) contained traces of a funeral meal in the form of animal bones (among which sheep bones dominated (12.5%)), arranged at the head (8.6%) or at the feet (4.0%) of the deceased, or in the filling of the grave pit (4.4%).

In a few cases (3.15%) burials contained clay pots, placed in the filling of the grave (1.7%), at the feet (0.8%) or head (0.65%) of the deceased.

The data presented give a general description of the funeral rite of the nomads of Ulus Jochi (the Golden Horde), which occupied a vast territory encompassing the entire steppe of Eastern Europe (Figure 7).

Since the appearance of the fundamental work by G. A. Fedorov-Davydov,¹⁵ the analysis of the funeral rite of the Golden Horde nomads in the South Urals, aimed at ascertaining their ethnicity, has been repeatedly performed by different researchers, who in general came to similar conclusions. Their essence is reduced to the following points:

- The two groups of burials of the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries, distinguished in the steppes of the Southern Urals, that differ in over-grave constructions – earthen mounds and mounds constructed with stone – reflect the heterogeneous ethnic composition of the nomadic population in the eastern part of Ulus Jochi.
- Among this population it is possible to distinguish the groups that are of Kypchak ethnicity (earthen mounds), and the groups that came to the region together with the Mongols from the steppes of southern Siberia and Altai.¹⁶
- Among the latter there could be the Uighurs and the Kangly.¹⁷

This article does not seek to consider thoroughly the ethnic composition of the Golden Horde nomads. In this case, the subject of our study is the historical geography of nomadic sites and the factors that might determine it. As was already mentioned, the majority of nomad burials of the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries are located in the steppes of the Trans-Volga region and the southern Urals, i.e., in the area which in the fourteenth century became the center of Ulus Jochi urban life. In our opinion, it was determined by the following factors: first of all, by the

¹⁵ G. A. Fedorov-Davydov, *Kochevniki Vostochnoi Evropy pod vlastju zolotoordynskih hanov*. Moscow 1966.

¹⁶ Ivanov V.A., Kriger V.A. *Kurgany kypchakского времени na Juzhnom Urale (XII-XIV vv.)*. Moscow 1988, 66.

¹⁷ A. F. Jaminov, *Juzhnyi Ural v XIII-XIV vv.* Avtoreferat diss. kand. ist. nauk. Ijevsk 1995; V. P. Kostjukov, *Ulus Shibana Zolotoi Ordj v XIII-XIV vv.* Kazan 2010, 127–129.

administrative policy of the Golden Horde khans aimed at the liberation of the fertile steppes of the Don and the Dnieper from the Kypchak-Polovtsian population. The distribution of graves under earthen mounds that have direct parallels with the funerary rites of the Kypchaks/Polovtsy of the pre-Mongol period (mostly related to the so-called "equestrian" burials) serves as a vivid example of the point. Secondly, the initial mass resettlement of nomads in the indicated area was not accompanied by an environmental crisis, since the steppes of this region were experiencing a peak of humidity, during which even the salt-marsh deserts and semi-deserts of the Caspian lowlands turned into a dry steppe and were quite suitable for the nomadic economy although to a limited extent.¹⁸

It would be very tempting to assume the development of the Lower Volga towns of the Golden Horde to be one of the factors that also determined the geography of the Golden Horde nomads' resettlement in the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries. However, the distance from nomadic mound burials to the urban centers shows that nomadic sites cannot be "inserted" into the urban district. For example, the area with a concentration of nomadic burials if the Golden Horde the nearest to the town of Saraichik – the lower course of the Uzen (Mokrinsky I, Lake Raim, Dzhangala [Nov. Kazanka] Dzhangala [Kara-Oba] and others) – is 240 km from the town in a straight line, a journey of at least five to six days on horseback.

The graves on the Uzen are even more remote from the Mavliberdinsky settlement on the Uil river (320–340 km in a straight line), where the remains of brick walls of thirty to forty buildings and irrigation canals are found.¹⁹

Near the town of Hadzhitarhan (Shareny Bugor), which sprang up in the fourteenth century,²⁰ nomadic burials did not occur at any rate. First, the city is located in the Volga delta, and the nearest burial mound to it – Seitovsky (30 km to the north-east)²¹ – is located on the left bank of the Akhtuba in the semi-desert zone.²² Secondly, this very area (dry steppe at the relevant time) would hardly attract nomads to its intensive development. Therefore, the absolute majority of nomadic burials of the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries that are well known in modern Astrakhan (Nikolsky, Cherny Yar, Krivaya Luka, Solyenoye Zaymishche, Staritsa etc.) are found much further north, beyond the Caspian deserts and semi-deserts.

¹⁸ V. A. Demkin, T. S. Demkina, „Archeologicheskoe pochvovedenie: novoe napravlenie v izuchenii drevnei i srednevekovoi istorii prirody i obchestva." *Archeologia vostochnoeuropeiskoi stepi* <http://www.sgu.ru/files/nodes/41059/05.pdf>

¹⁹ V. L. Egorov, *Istoricheskaja geografija Zolotoi Ordy v XIII-XIV vv.* Moscow 1982, 127–128.

²⁰ A. V. Pachkalov, "O vremeni vzniknovenija goroda Hadzhitarhan." *XVIII Uralskoe archeologicheskoe soveshchanie: kulturnye oblasti, archeologicheskie kultury, hronology.* Materialy XVIII Uralskogo archeologicheskogo soveshanija. Ufa 2010, 349–351.

²¹ The burial has not been explored, so its reference to the Golden Horde is defined only by bricks found in the site (L. F. Nedashkovsky, *Zolotoordynskie goroda Nizhnego Povolzhia i ih okruga.* Moscow 2010, 154).

²² At that time it must have been a dry steppe.

Naturally, we cannot but mention the 528 moundless burials of the Golden Horde era, found and studied in the vicinity of the settlement of Shareny Bugor.²³ But what does "in the vicinity" mean in this case? The largest cluster of moundless burials of the Golden Horde era (more than 370 burials) – the burials of Baranovka (Kalmatsky Bugor), Vakurovsky Bugor I and II, Mayachny Bugor I-III, Mechetny Bugor I and II – are located 30 km east of the fort, on the left bank of the Buzan branch²⁴. Such territorial remoteness makes it very difficult to consider these burial grounds as an element of the socio-cultural structure of the city of Hadzhitarhan (despite the fact that the burials are mostly Muslim).

The city of Saray al-Mahrus (Selitrennoye settlement) did not have nomadic mounds in its surroundings at all. The nearest (the only) nomadic burial – Yeno-taevsky – is located 35 km to the north-west, on the right bank of the Volga²⁵, and does not have any relationship to the urban complex.

In the immediate vicinity of the town of Beldzhamen (Vodyansky settl.)²⁶ nomadic burials of the Golden Horde era have not been revealed either. Six of the burials at the cemetery near the settlement of Verkhneye Pogromnoye are located on the left bank of the Volga, opposite the settlement. The burial in the mound of s. Gusevka is 70 km north of Vodyansky settlement.²⁷

A similar pattern is observed in the vicinity of Uvek (outskirts of modern Saratov). The burial mounds nearest to the town – Pokrovsky, Zaumorie, Skatovka – are located on the left bank of the Volga, and Atkarsk ground burial area is 70 km to the northwest. The territory of modern East Tatarstan, where the largest number of cities that existed in the era of the Golden Horde are concentrated, is known for only four nomadic burials, at Balymersky cemetery. They can be interpreted as no more than a random phenomenon in the area (Figure 7).

In the steppes to the west of the Volga a similar picture is observed: in the immediate vicinity of the Golden Horde cities of Majari, Azak, Shehr al-Jadid (Old Orhei), Ak-Kerman and Kealia no nomadic burial mounds were found.²⁸

Fedorov-Davydov in his time advanced the thesis that two cultural traditions were combined in the Golden Horde – urban and nomadic. The first represented a syncretic phenomenon characteristic of the poly-ethnic and multi-confessional population of the Golden Horde cities, and the second continued the traditions of nomadic culture of the steppes of Eastern Europe in the twelfth–early thirteenth century. They existed in parallel and independently of each other:

²³ Nedashkovsky, *Zolotoordynskie goroda*, 137–154.

²⁴ Nedashkovsky, *Zolotoordynskie goroda*, 124, Figure 4

²⁵ Nedashkovsky, *Zolotoordynskie goroda*, 91, Figure 3

²⁶ Egorov, *Istoricheskaja geografija*, 109–110.

²⁷ G. N. Garustovich, A. I. Rakushin, A. F. Jaminov, *Srednevekovye kochevniki Povolzhia*. Ufa 1998, 83.

²⁸ The nearest to the town of Azak the mounds Russkiy Kolodets and Manuylovka are located 50 km far from it, across the Taganrog Bay, and the nearest to the town of Kilia Trapovskiy burial is situated 60 km to the north-east on the eastern shore of lake Sasyk (Kunduk).

"In the fourteenth century the material culture of the nomadic population and the culture of the steppe cities of the Golden Horde were dissimilar phenomena that had little in common. These two types of population are mostly united by their common reference to the Golden Horde, that is, the Khan's total despotic power."²⁹

The results of this analysis of the geography of the Golden Horde cities and nomadic burials of the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries fully confirm this thesis.

Taking all the aforesaid into consideration, we can put forward a number of conclusions:

Firstly, the emergence of the Pechenegs in the steppes of Eastern Europe as a result of their defeat in wars with the Oguz ultimately might not contradict the policy goals of either the Khazar or Byzantine rulers. The Khazars, evidently, had not created (or had failed to create) an insurmountable obstacle in the way of the Pechenegs' movement to the west, so the Pechenegs, displacing the Magyars from Levedia (between the rivers Seversky Donets and Dnieper)³⁰ found a more favorable ecological niche than their victors - the Oguz. This allowed them quickly to become a powerful political and military force which at that time actively influenced the course of the Balkan-Mediterranean policy of Byzantium and the Kievan Rus.

Secondly, the Oguz staying in the Trans-Volga region could not become a real force in the steppes of Eastern Europe (although they contributed to the defeat of the Khazars by the Kievan Prince Svyatoslav in 965), and therefore their subsequent history developed in West Asia, where they retreated under the onslaught of the Kypchaks/Polovtsy.

Thirdly, the Kypchaks/Polovtsy themselves in their expansion to the west had no serious hindrance from the Khazar Khanate, so they passed quickly across the Trans-Volga steppes, chasing the Oguz, who, for whatever reasons, had not gone to the south with the Sultan Seljuks. More favorable from an environmental viewpoint, the steppe between the Kuban and the mouth of the Danube soon became the Kypchak-Polovtsian domain, known to oriental authors as Dasht-i-Kypchak, to Russian authors as Polovetskoye Polye, and to European and Byzantine authors as Kumania.

Fourthly, a reverse migration of the Kypchaks/Polovtsy into the steppes of the east of the Volga and the southern Urals in the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries was determined by the administrative policy of the Golden Horde khans (Ulus Djuchi), who resettled the Kypchaks/Polovtsy dependent on them to less comfortable margins of the steppes of Eastern Europe.

Thus, the contours of the map of the medieval settlement of nomads in the steppes of Eastern Europe were formed not spontaneously, but under the influence of the political situation of that time.

²⁹ G. A. Fedorov-Davydov, *Iskusstvo kochevnikov i Zolotoi Ordya*. Moscow 1976, 118.

³⁰ It happened not long before 895.

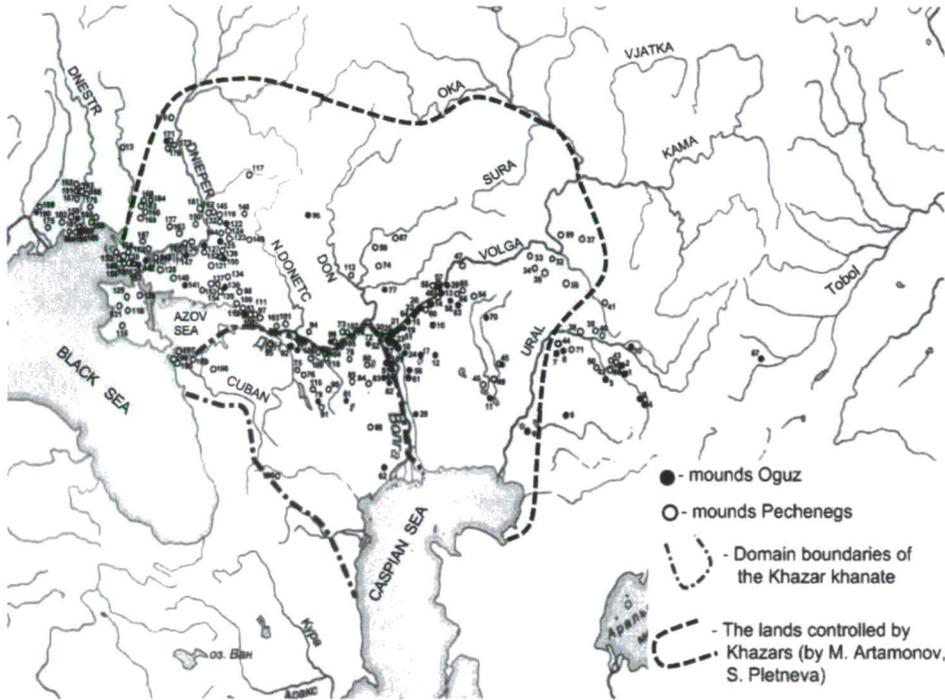


FIGURE 1. Map of Oguz and Pecheneg mounds in Eastern Europe from the end of the ninth to the beginning of the tenth century

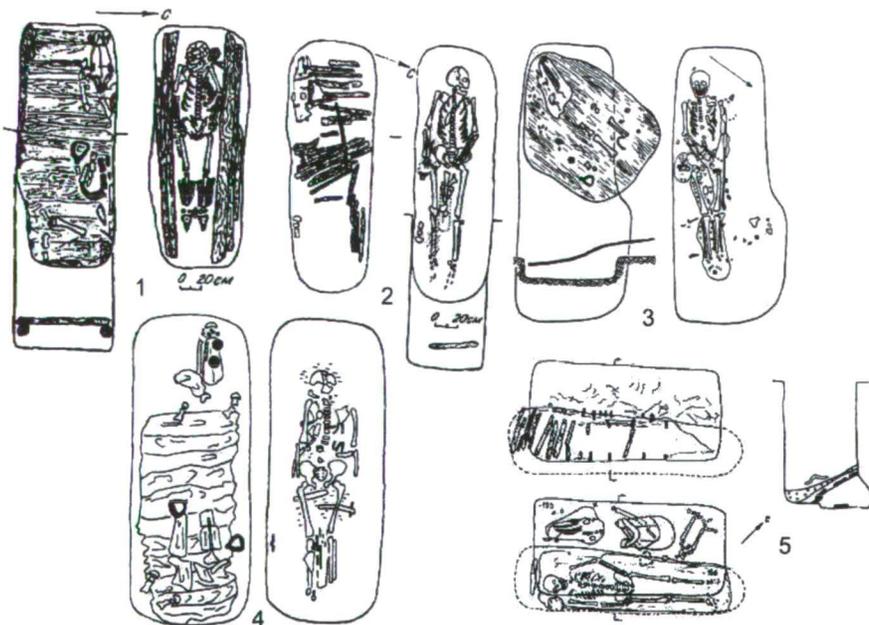


FIGURE 2. Burials of the Oguz
1-Uvak; 2-Bykovo I; 3-Chenin; 4-Verchny Balyklei; 5-Bolgarka I

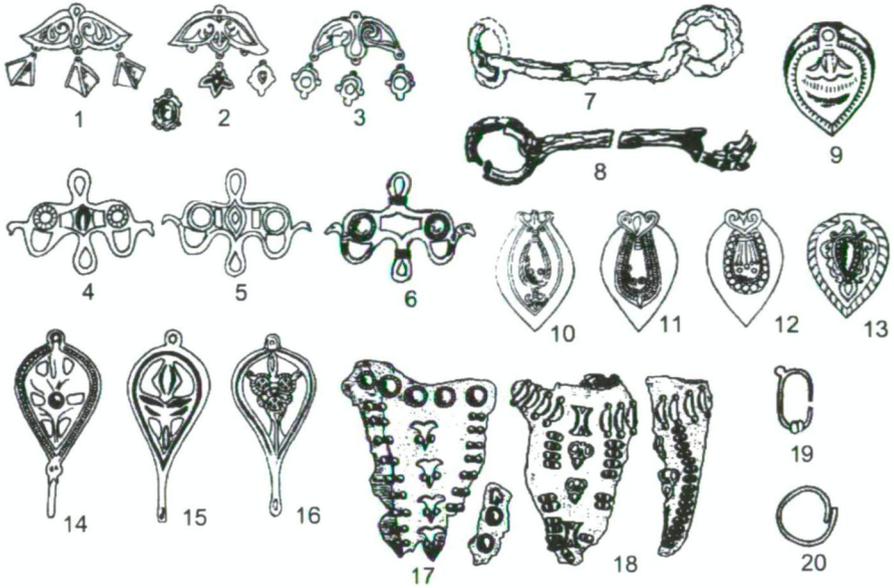


FIGURE 3. Characteristic (ethnographic) items from Oguz and Pecheneg burials
 1-6 ptitsevidnyye pendants-amulets; 9-13 plates, Reshma; 14-16 Pendants-kopoushki;
 17-18 jewelry, shoes; 7,8,19,20 horse bits and earrings from Pecheneg mounds.

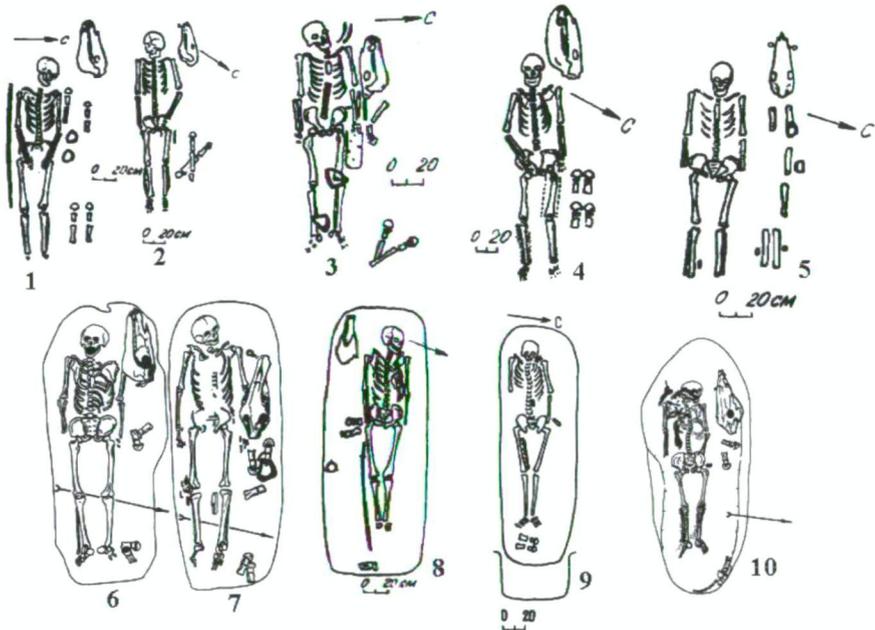


FIGURE 4. Pecheneg burials
 1-Juzefovka; 2-Kazanka I; 3-Novaja Molchanovka; 4-Rovnoe; 5-Kagarlyk; 6-Sarkel, b.35; 7-Sarkel,
 b.8; 8-Kupcyn-Tolga; 9-Nikolskoe; 10-Sarkel, b.47.

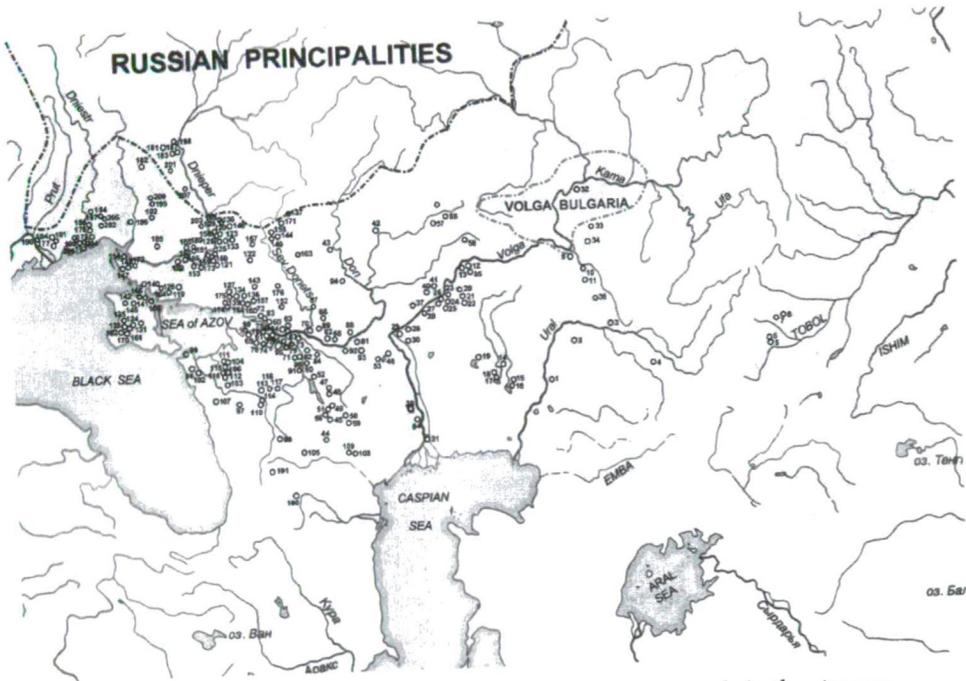


FIGURE 5. Distribution map of Kypchak/Polovtsian mounds in the steppes of Eastern Europe (second half of the eleventh-beginning of the thirteenth century)

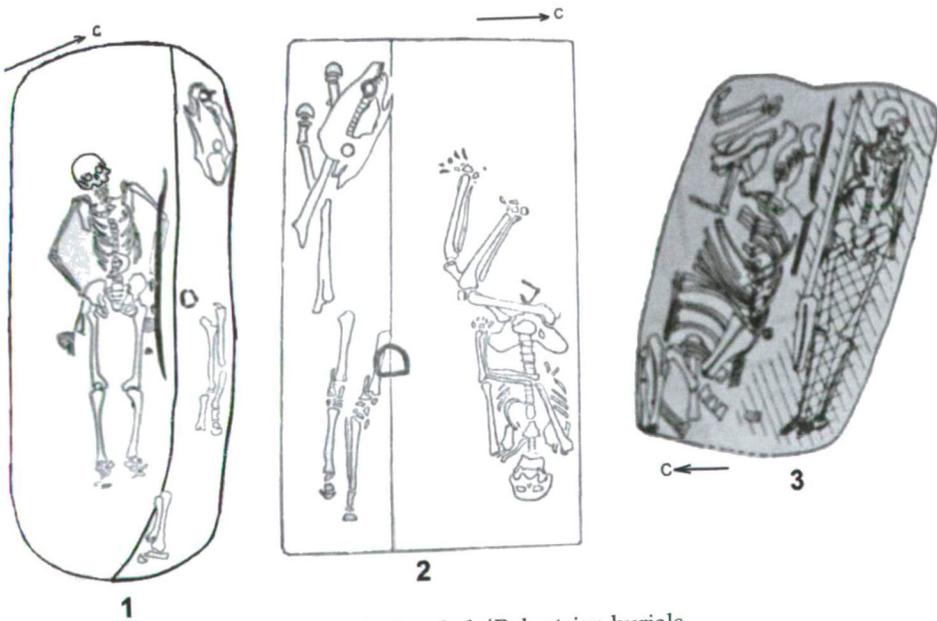


Figure 6. Kypchak/Polovtsian burials
 1- Canal Volga-Chograi 42; 2- Canal Volga-Chograi 240; 3- Zergenta.

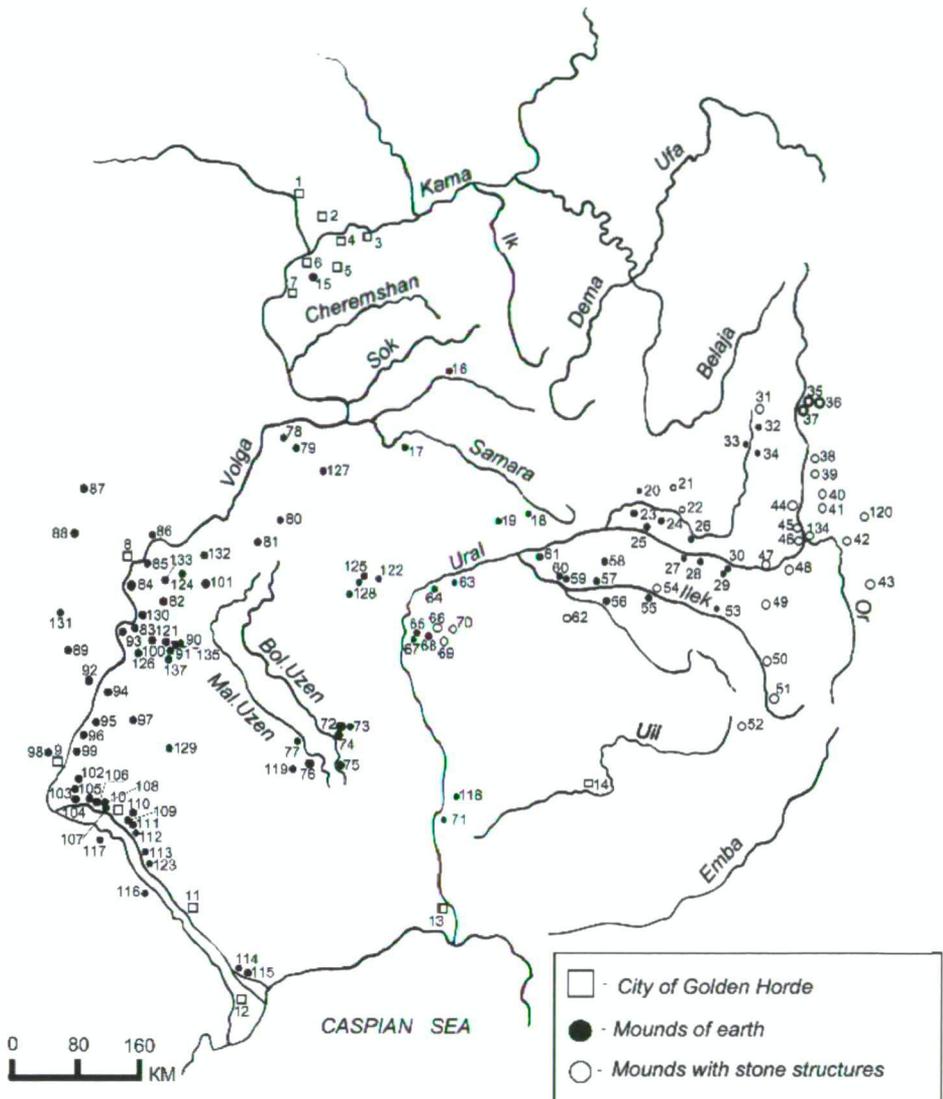


FIGURE 7. Map of the Volga Ulus Jochi (Golden Horde) in the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries

1 - Kazan; 2 - Kermenchuk; 3 - Dzhuketau; 4 - Kashan; 5 - Biljar; 6 - Bulgar; 7 - Suvar;
 8 - Uvek; 9 - Beldzhamen; 10 - Saray al-Jedid; 11 - Saray al-Mahrus; 12 - Hadzhitarhan;
 13 - Saraychik; 14 - Mavliberdinsky settlement.

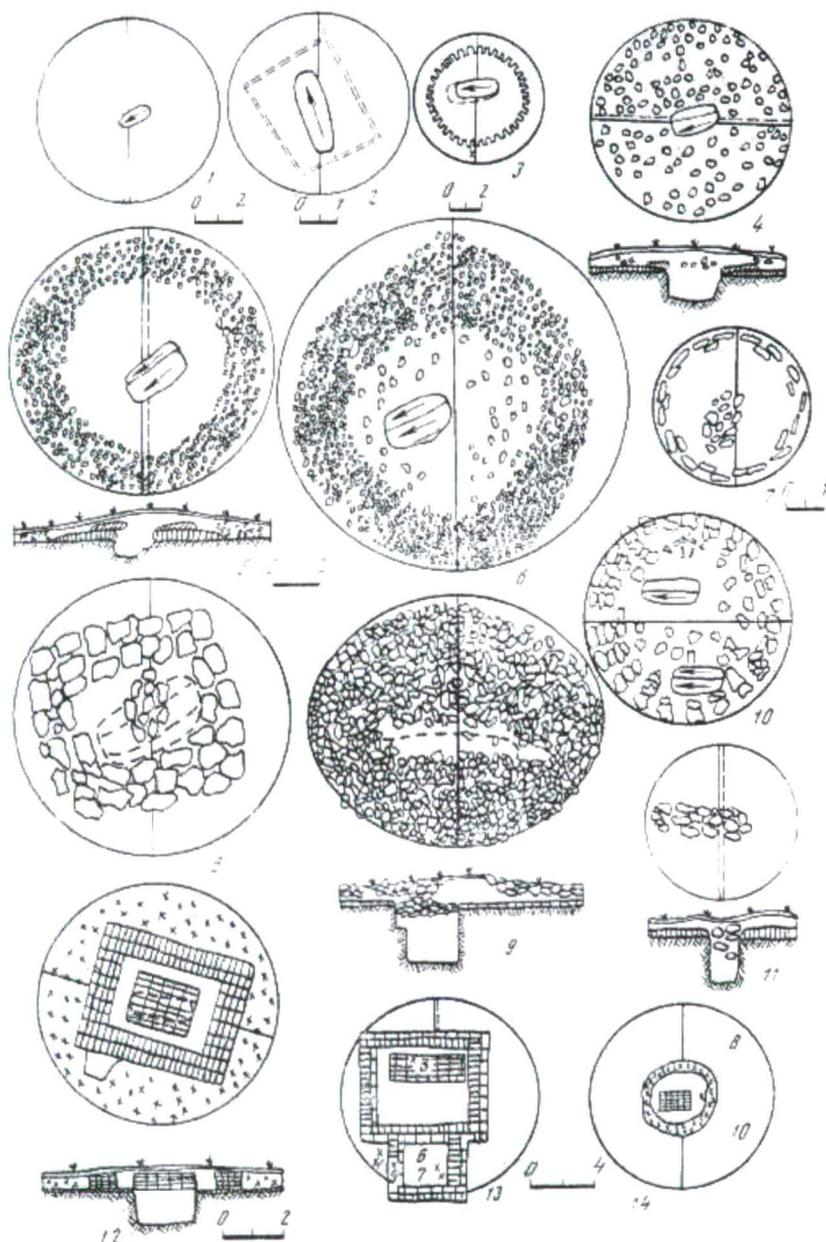


FIGURE 8. Types of nomad barrows of the Golden Horde era from the Ural-Volga region
 1 - Novy Kumak, b.1; 2 - Tl'javgulovo, b.2; 3 - Imangulovo II, b.1; 4 - Novy Kumak, b.15; 5 - Novy Kumak, b. 29; 6 - Novy Kumak, b. 9; 7 - Tl'javgulovo, b.4; 8 - Urta-Burtja, b.2; 9 - Novy Kumak, b. 3; 10 - Novy Kumak, b. 16; 11 - Urta-Burtja, b.1; 12 - Lebedevka VIII, b.1; 13 - Karaul-Tube, b.1; 14 - Karaul-Tube, b.5.

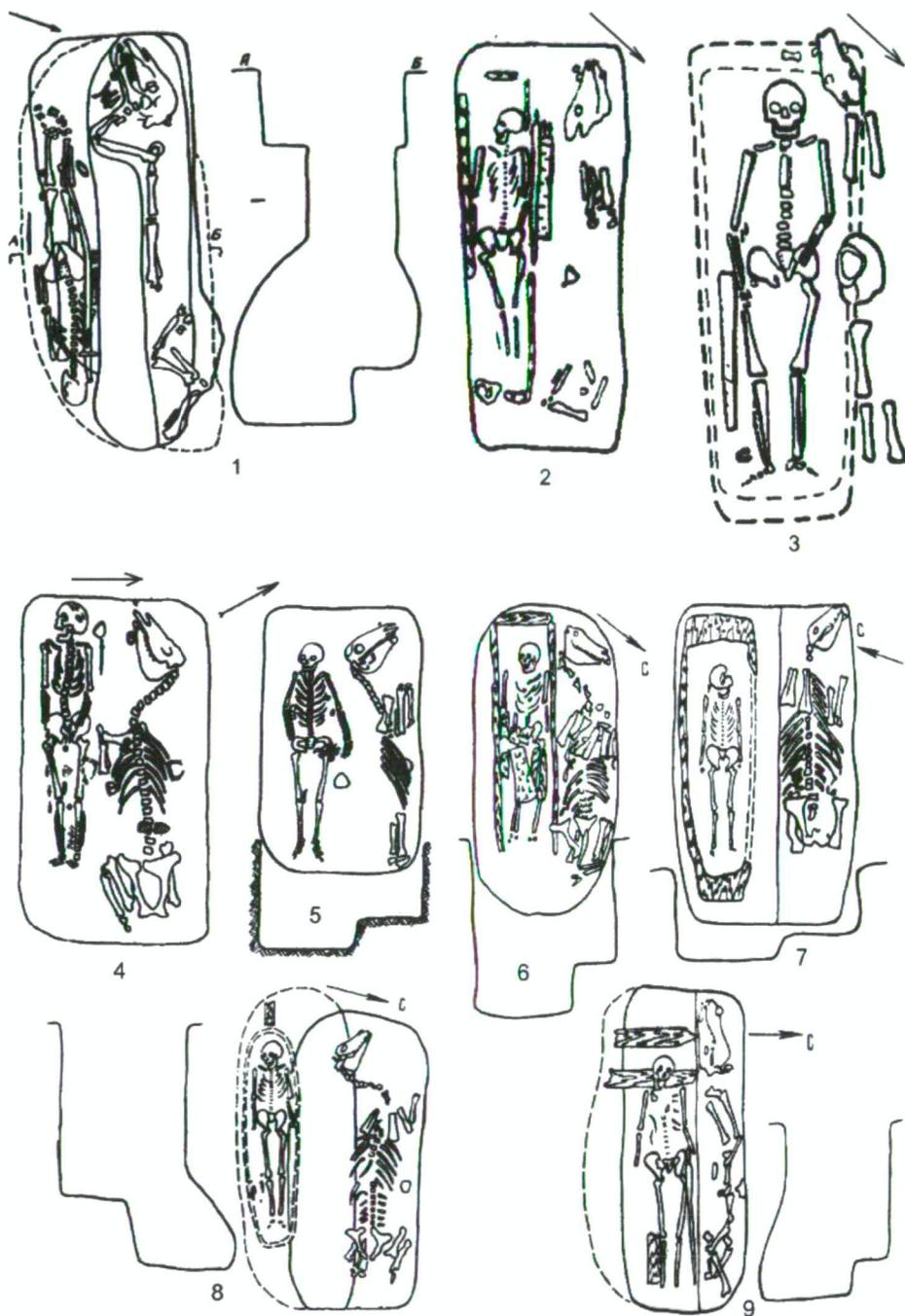


FIGURE 9. Nomad burials of the Golden Horde era from the Ural-Volga region
 1-Lebedevka VIII; 2 - Ivanovka IV; 3 - Ankersk, b. 21; 4 - Tljavgulovo; 5-Ural; 6 - Novy Kumak,
 b. 8; 7 - Novy Kumak, b. 14; 8 - Novy Kumak, b. 28; 9 - Novy Kumak, b. 2.