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Monograph

# KIPCHAKS IN THE CAUCASUS

**Ismailzade S.J.**

# **KIPCHAKS IN THE CAUCASUS**

**Monograph**

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## INTRODUCTION

### *Relevance of the Topic*

The events and changes happening in our modern world, particularly globalization and secularization processes, also impact the history and culture of different nations. While these events indeed promote globalization, they also lead to the assimilation and disappearance of individual cultures within dominant ones. Therefore, studying the history and cultural history of different nations is one of the most urgent issues of our time.

It is known that currently, the field of Turkology has embarked on a path of significant development worldwide. In this regard, researching the history of each Turkic nation is extremely important. It is also known that the attitude towards Turkic peoples and the approach to their history are not unambiguous. This viewpoint further confirms the relevance of the topic.

In Azerbaijani science, the study of Turkic peoples, their history, Turkic linguistics, and the culture of Turkic peoples are still areas that have not been fully explored. Naturally, this refers to the monographic and conceptual study of the history of these peoples. Throughout history, some Turkic peoples have existed and been active on the historical stage, about whom there is sufficient information in other languages, including Russian, but the information in Azerbaijani is brief and superficial. One of these Turkic peoples is the Kipchaks. Throughout history, the Kipchaks have played a significant role in the history of both Turkic and non-Turkic speaking peoples and states. This is confirmed by their frequent mention in medieval sources. Studying the history of the Kipchaks is important both from the perspective of understanding the history of Turkic-speaking peoples and non-Turkic speaking peoples who interacted with the Kipchaks. Some sources present these Turkic tribes as uncivilized, wild tribes. However, research shows that this view is not accurate. The Kipchaks' military traditions, statehood history, customs, and rich culture have also played a significant role in shaping the cultures of other nations.

The Kipchak tribes played a major, even decisive role in the ethnic and historical formation processes of both Turkic and non-Turkic peoples in the modern North and South Caucasus, particularly in the development of some peoples (especially the Karachays, Circassians, and Kumyks). However, this issue remained unstudied until the 1970s, and although research began in the 1970s, it was not investigated at the necessary level. The issues that were studied were approached unilaterally. Georgian historians, for example, can be cited in this context. Although their works mention the migration of the Kipchaks to Georgia and their political activities there, the role of the Kipchaks is generally downplayed, and some Georgian commanders of Kipchak origin are presented as Georgian. An example of this is the book "The Battle of Didgori" published in Georgia. The author initially notes the small size and weak combat capability of King David IV's army, then discusses the migration of the Kipchaks. However, when describing subsequent events, the author persistently attributes these victories to the Georgian army and even tries to undermine the undeniable fact of the Kipchaks' decisive role in the Battle of Didgori (75, 75). The question of how King David IV could train and field an army of 60,000 in a short period in a small and sparsely populated state does not interest him at all. The same can be said about other Georgian historians.

A similar issue is observed in Azerbaijani history. The ethnic and political role of the Kipchaks in Azerbaijani history is still being studied as a separate problem. The names of Lala Aliyeva and Rauf Huseynov should be mentioned in this regard. Academician Ziya Bunyadov also played a special role in studying the activities of the Kipchaks in Azerbaijan. His book "The State of the Atabegs of Azerbaijan" is noteworthy. However, the book focuses on the political activities of the Eldiguzid dynasty, which was of origin, rather than the role of the Kipchaks themselves. The role of the Kipchaks as an ethnic group in the Atabeg state is only briefly mentioned. Therefore, much work is still needed for an in-depth study of this problem.

## MAIN PART

### *The Origin of the Kipchaks*

Among the many issues in the ethno-political history of the Kipchaks, the most complex one has been the question of their origin. Most scholars of the 18th and 19th centuries considered the Kipchaks to be a Turkic-origin people. This view was largely confirmed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, thanks to the works of N.A. Aristov, V.V. Bartold, and V.F. Minorsky, and today there is no doubt about the Turkic origin of the Kipchaks.

Based on the nature of the sources, the factual material can be divided into the following groups: historical, linguistic, and archaeological-ethnographic. To date, the historical and linguistic aspects have been more thoroughly studied.

The issue of the first mention of the Kipchak ethnonym in literature has not yet been fully resolved. A.N. Bernshtam first drew attention to the historical record of the Chinese chronicle "Shiji" (Historical Records) by Sima Qian (2nd century BCE), which mentions the conquests of the Hun Shanyu Modu in the north, along with the Kyrgyz, Dinlin, and Sinli tribes. According to A.N. Bernshtam, the ethnonym "tszyue-she" should be pronounced "kyuy-she" in ancient Chinese, which he believes should be translated as Kipchak, thus expressing the earliest known form of the Kipchak ethnonym (22, 43). Many researchers support this view. However, N.A. Aristov argued that the ethnonym "kyuy-she" referred to the Kucuk tribe (14, 40). S.Q. Klyashorny notes that the attempt to identify the tsyuyše tribe mentioned by Sima Qian (2nd century BC) as the Kirçak tribe is not phonologically justified. (54, 162).

Specifically, the name "Kipchak," as already mentioned, dates back to the mid-8th century in historical records (21, 102; 50, 63). This ethnonym is inscribed on a stone pillar ("Selenga Stone"). The inscription states that in the land of the Turks and the Toquz Oghuz (Uyghurs) who were under their control for some time, the ruling tribes were the Turks and the Kipchaks (54, 64).

Since the discovery of this inscription, there have been two views regarding its interpretation. Cautious researchers like V.V. Bartold, P. Pelliot, and V.F. Minorsky, who touched on the Kipchak issue in their studies, did not mention anything about information from the Mongolian steppes. In contrast, all Soviet researchers unconditionally accepted G.J. Ramstedt's hypothesis. S.G. Klyashtorny, who worked for many years to verify the validity of G.J. Ramstedt's hypothesis, concluded that "the reading of the first word as Turk is undoubtedly correct; the reconstruction preserved in the eroded parts of the characters is entirely justified" (53, 215).

Returning to the text of the inscription "The Turks-Kipchaks ruled...", it can be assumed that in this case, the two ethnic names are used synonymously. In the medieval history of Central Asia, the Turks, who established powerful state formations in the Mongolian steppes, namely the First and Second Eastern Turkic Khaganates, historically represented the ruling clan lineage of the ancient Kipchaks or ancient Turks. The Kipchaks are ancient Turks, and the problem of resolving the issue of the origin of the Kipchaks is fundamentally based on understanding the ethnogenesis of the Turks themselves.

S.M. Akhinjanov notes that although the joint reading "Turk-Kipchak" proposed by G.J. Ramstedt is grammatically correct, it is difficult to accept (14, 42). Instances of merging or equating two ethnonyms in a unitary inscription have not been encountered in the inscriptions. S.G. Klyashtorny also believes this (19, 217). Moreover, the semantics of each ethnic name are not fully defined and do not have broad meanings. Therefore, the sequential reading of the ethnonyms typical of runic texts should be read as independent names: "Turks and Kipchaks."

The joint mention of the Turks and Kipchaks in a written monument indicates that they had a political and military union formed against the Uyghurs in Central Mongolia. Uyghur leader Eletmish Bilge Khagan recalls in 744, the year of the allies' dissolution, that they had ruled over his khanate for 50 years (54, 41). Thus, at the end of the 7th century, the Kipchaks were such a powerful entity that the leadership of the highly influential Second Turkic Khaganate did not consider it humiliating to form an alliance



with them. However, if we look for the smallest mention of a people named Qipchaq in the sources of that period, we will find nothing.

S.G. Klyashtorny writes about this: "The absence of any references to the Kipchaks in the 8th-9th centuries seems mysterious and leads to the assumption that such information exists in already known sources in an encrypted form" (54, 153). The solution to the mystery lies in referring to runic inscriptions where the names of the Turks are mentioned along with other tribes.

In the monuments dedicated to Kül Tigin and Bilge Khagan (Kocho Saydam monuments), the name "Dokuz Oghuz" is mentioned along with "Turk bodun." More precisely, it discusses the subjugation of the Dokuz Oghuz from 687-691 and various campaigns by the Turks against them over the years. The Dokuz Oghuz (Uyghurs) were led by rulers belonging to the "On Uyghurs." It is one of these rulers, Eletmish Bilge Khagan, whose inscriptions mention the Turks alongside the Kipchaks.

Now let's refer to the Tonyukuk monument. Talking about the same events as the Kocho Saydam monuments, the Tonyukuk inscription, while describing the events leading to the establishment of the Second Turkic Khaganate, uses the term "Turk bodun." However, when describing events after the establishment of the Khaganate, it uses "Turk-Sir bodun." Another Turkish monument, Ixe Khoshutu, calls the ruler of the Sirs "Sir Irkin" (96, 35).

In the monument dedicated to Bilge Khagan, from 735, the names of the six Sir tribes are mentioned immediately after the Turks but before the Oghuz. This highlights the high position of the Sirs in the tribal hierarchy. From comparing the information on the ruling tribal unions in the Turkic Khaganate from runic monuments, S.G. Klyashtorny concludes: "The ruling tribal group called 'Turk and Sir' in the Turkic monuments is called 'Turk and Kipcha in the Uyghur monument 'Shine Usu' (Selenga Stone). As a result, the same tribal alliance that shared power with the Turks is called by the Sir ethnonym in Turkic monuments and by the Kipchak ethnonym in Uyghur monuments. In other words, both ethnonyms are identical" (53, 71).

It turns out that the ethnonym expressed as "se" in Chinese transcription corresponds to the word "Sir" in Turkish inscriptions, and the tribe known as "Seyanto" in Chinese sources is called "Sir" in the Tonyukuk inscription. Thus, traces of the Kipchaks are also observed in the period before the 8th century, and they were indeed recorded and hidden under the Seyanto ethnonym.

The Seyanto belonged to one of the two large Turkic-speaking nomadic tribal unions—Turk and Tele—in the eastern part of Central Asia in the mid-first millennium. "Tan Shu" states: "Among the Tele lineages, this was the most powerful," and elsewhere it is noted that the Seyanto were "a special lineage of the Tele." The Tele union, composed of many ethnic groups, occupied a vast area from the Great Khingan in the east to the Caspian Sea in the west (14, 44).

The historical fate of the Tele tribes is closely linked to that of the ancient Turks. The establishment of Turkic and Tele states in Central and Middle Asia led to significant ethnic changes: mutual victories and defeats between the 6th and 8th centuries affected related tribal unions that had once been part of the Huns. Sources state that the ancestors of the Tele were descendants of the Huns, and the Tele language was the same as the Hun language (22, 112). In the mid-first millennium, many Tele and Turkic groups were drawn into the ethno-political relations of the Turkic and Tele Khaganates, while others were pushed out of their former territories by the new political force. This led to the ethnic transformation of some tribes and the local dispersal of others. The Seyanto tribe could not escape this fate either (14, 44).

The first information about the two tribes that made up the special Tele tribe—the Seyanto, "Se and Yanto"—dates back to the 4th century according to Chinese chronicles. Here, the Yanto tribe is presented among the Hun tribes that settled in the steppes east of Ordos. They were led by Shanyu Khalatou, and his people consisted of 35,000 carts. The Seyanto were precisely their descendants. They lived with the Se lineage, hence, the name "Se-Yanto." "Tan Shu" provides more precise information: the Seyanto consisted of two

lineages; Se and Yanto. The ruling lineage in the new confederation was Se. They defeated the Yanto leader named "Ilitu (Iltar)" (2, 11).

The first strong manifestation of the ancient Turks occurred in the mid-6th century when the First Turkic Khaganate was established after the fall of the Rouran. The Tele kinship groups, including the Seyanto, were also part of this Khaganate as vassals and were defeated by the Turks during their campaign against the Rouran. The Seyanto, among the subjugated Tele tribes, formed an important stratum within the ancient Turkic Khaganate. The Turks, as recorded in the chronicle, dominated the northern steppes with their forces.

At the end of the 6th century, sources indicate that the Seyanto lived in two compact but quantitatively unequal groups in the eastern part of Central Asia. The smallest group of Seyanto resided in Khangai, where they were pressured by neighboring Tele tribes. The other, more powerful group settled with their migrations in the territories between the southeastern slopes of the Eastern Tian Shan and Altai, initially under the rule of the Khagans of the First Turkic Khaganate and later the Western Turkic state (1, 118).

From the beginning of Turk-Tele interactions, the Seyanto tribe remained a focal point for the Turkic Khagans, who fundamentally feared the Seyanto and endeavored to weaken them in every possible way. For instance, in 605, the khagan of the Tuğyu, Chulo, destroyed the entire lineage of Tiele and increased the taxes levied on them. Furthermore, suspecting resistance from the Seyanto and others, he gathered several hundred leaders and killed them all. Consequently, the Tiele revolted against Chulo (39, 9). Over the next few years, intermittent conflicts between them continued with varying success. At times, the Tele briefly united around the Seyanto, even forming their own alliance, which intimidated neighboring states. All neighboring states—Ju, Gaochang, and Yanqi—were completely subdued (39, 9), but eventually, the Western Turkic Khagans gained the upper hand, forcing the largest Seyanto group to abandon their migrations after a few successful skirmishes with the coalition of Tele tribes. They moved south of the Tola River to their ancient lands, coming under the dominion of the Eastern Turkic Khagans. However, the

Seyanto tribe did not find peace in these areas either, as the Eastern Turkic Khagans imposed heavy taxes on them, leading the Seyanto to revolt. They were supported by related Tele tribes, particularly the Uyghurs. Bolstered by these alliances, the Seyanto defeated the Eastern Turks in 627 and, finally in 630, the First Eastern Turkic Khaganate collapsed, and the remaining Turkic tribes joined the Seyanto. As noted by S.G. Klyashtorny, this marked the beginning of the tribal alliances of the Turks and Sirs (53, 76).

It turns out that the ethnonym, expressed in Chinese transcription as se, corresponds to the word “sir” of Turkic monuments, and in Chinese sources the Tribe Called seyanto was named “sir” in the Ton-yukuk script. Thus, traces of the Kipchaks are observed even in the period before the VIII century, and they were indeed recorded and hidden under the ethnonym seyanto.

Seyanto belonged to one of two large Turkic - speaking nomadic tribal unions that existed in the middle of the first millennium in the eastern part of Central Asia-Turkic and tele, namely tele. "Tan Shu "also says:" it was the strongest among the tele generations, "elsewhere it is noted that seyanto is"a special generation of tele." The tele-Union of tribes, consisting of many et-nos in its composition, occupied a huge territory of the Eurasian steppes from the Great Khingan in the east to the Caspian Sea in the West. (14, 44)

The historical fate of the tele tribes is closely connected with the destinies of the ancient Turks. The establishment of the Turkic and tele States led to extensive ethnic changes in Central and Central Asia: during the VI-VIII centuries, mutual victories and defeats affected the Kindred tribal unions that had ever become part of the Huns. Sources report that the ancestors of the Tele were descendants of the Huns, and the tele language was the same as the Huns (22, 112). In the middle of the first millennium, many groupings of tele and Turks were involved in the sphere of ethnopolitical relations of the Turkic and tele kaganates, while the rest, on the contrary, were pushed out of the previous territory by a new political force. This led to a certain ethnic transformation of some Thai-Falas and local retail of others. The seyanto tribe also could not escape this fate (14, 44).

The first information about the two tribes that formed a special tribe of telen-seyanto, "se and yanto", according to Chinese chronicles, goes back to the IV century AD. Here the yanto tribe is listed within the tribes of the Huns, who settled in the steppes east of Ordos. They were led by Shanyuy Khalatou, and his people consisted of 35 thousand carts. Seyanto were precisely their derivatives. They lived with the descendants of sue, and from here they are also called "sye-yanto". More accurate information is given in "tanshu": syeyanto consisted of two generations; sye and yanto. The new Confederation was led by the ruling Generation se. They had defeated the leadership of yanto called "Ilitu (Iltter)". (2, 11)

The first strong manifestation of the ancient Turks took place in the middle of the VI century, when, after the collapse of the jujans, the I Turkic Khaganate was formed. This Khaganate also included tele kindred units by vassal right, which were destroyed by the Turks during the campaign against the jujans. Among the subjugated tele tribes were the seyantos. They formed an important layer within the ancient Turkic Khaganate. The Turks, as the Chronicle says, ruled with their forces in the steppes of the North.

At the end of the sixth century, according to sources, seyanto lived in two places in the eastern part of Central Asia in the form of two compact, but quantitatively unequal collectives: the smallest group of Seyanto lived in Khangai, where they were pressured by neighboring tele tribes. Another stronger group of seyanto, with their migrations, settled in the territories between the Southern Western landings of the Eastern Tien Shan and Altai, and first came under the subordination of the khagans of the I Turkic Khaganate, and then the Western Turkic state (1, 118).

Since the establishment of Turkish-tele mutual relations, the seyanto tribe has always been in the center of attention of the Turkic khagans. They were fundamentally wary of the seyantos and tried in every possible way to weaken them. For example, in 605, the Kagan of the tuchzyues destroyed the entire descendants of Chulo Tyele and increased taxes from them. In addition, suspecting that seyanto and others would come against him, he gathered several hundred of their chieftains and killed them all. Therefore, they rebelled

against Tyele and opposed Chulo (39, 9). For several years, the struggle between them continued with intermittent success. At some times, they even formed their own units, grouping around the short-lived tele seyanto, and this frightened neighboring countries. All states-Ju, Gaochan, Yangtze-were completely subjugated (39, 9), but the Western Turkic khagans finally gained the upper hand and, after several successful clashes with their coalition from the tele tribes, forced the largest of them-seyanto-to abandon their migration. They moved south from the Tola River to their ancient lands, where they fell under the rule of the East Turkic khagans. However, the seyanto tribe did not gain calm in these places. The eastern Turkic khagans also imposed heavy taxes on them, at which time seyanto rose to rebellion. They were supported by Kindred tele tribes, especially the Uyghurs. Having gained strength at their expense, the seyantos defeated the East Turks in 627 in such a way that the first East Turkic Khaganate finally collapsed in 630, and the qaan Turkic tribes joined seyanto. S.Q.Thus, as klyastorny notes, the beginning of the tribal alliances of the Turks and the mysteries was laid

In order to subjugate the places left by the eastern Turks and the Turkic tribes that continued to lead a nomadic life there, in the eastern part of Central Asia, on the Khangai plateau, two large factions competed from teleh-the Uyghurs and seyanto. Seyanto and Uyghurs - both turned to the Chinese emperor for help. He spent on China to keep and support competition among northern nomadic peoples . This time they supported seyanto and their leader Ina. Inan declared himself Yenchu Bilge Khagan (Chinese Zhenchju Bilge Khagan).

In the steppes of Central Asia, a new Khaganate of seyanto arose. Their leader Inan placed his capital on the Right Bank of the Tola River, at the western foot of the Khangai mountains, north of the Gobi Desert (25,339). During its heyday, the territory of the Khaganate bordered Shivey in the East, Altai Mountains in the West, Tukyue in the South, Baikal in the North, and these were the ancient lands of the Huns (25, 340).

During this period, seyanto had an army of 200 thousand select Warriors, which, of course, was a great threat to the Chinese empire and the surrounding tribes and peoples.

The Chinese rulers of the Tang dynasty, especially the emperor Taytszun, who was in power at this time, tried not to allow such a threat on their northern borders. Concerned about seyanto's force, the tan authorities ' diplomats and military men used all their strength for the complete destruction of the seyanto kaganate.

In order to further weaken the seyanto Khaganate, the Chinese emperor decided to give his (Believe me) lands to his two sons in separation, to make them both little Khan, to give both drums and flags. Outwardly, they were shown mercy and respect, and in deed, their strength was torn apart (14, 46). Then the same source reports: in the 19th year (645) in the 9th month, the eldest of Zhenchzhun's two sons, Sye-xun (Iman), the second Bachjo, were first appointed two younger khagans separately. When zhengju died, Bachjo killed his own older brother Syehu and rose to power. He became a Kagan by the name of Domi (14, 48).

As we can see, the Chinese judges used all possible means to weaken it in the fight against a potential enemy and completely destroy it at the last point. In 646, he entered into an alliance with them when the tele tribes - Uyghurs, Pugu, dolanche, adye, si and others, dissatisfied with Bachjo, the new Kagan of seyanto, turned to the Tan emperor for help. Since bachjo was not merciful to his subjects, he killed many landowners who served under his father, many of the Toguz-Oguz tribes moved away from him and destroyed the Chinese army, the seyanto Army in itti-fag with the eastern Turks, and the Uyghurs killed Bachjo, who fled from the battlefield, and slaughtered all his descendants and captured his lands. Seyanto disbanded after these events and disintegrated into several factions. Their huge mass, 70,000 people, fled to the West, where they again tried to gather forces. But all the adults of tyele's nine families were frightened by this, hearing about their settlement. The Chinese rulers were also wary of their regrowth, so the Allies began to take active measures to destroy what was left of seyanto. The Tan General Li Tszi reached part of the seyanto people in the northern soot of Otyuke and killed up to 5,000 and captured up to 30,000 old people and children, destroying him in this way... (50). The later history of the Seyanto is essentially the history of the tribal alliance of the Turks and Sirs,

with the Turks playing the dominant role. At the head of the new wave of Turkic people who founded the Second Eastern Turkic Khaganate was Qudulu (known in ancient Turkic inscriptions as Ilterish Khagan). His first residence was in the southern part of the desert, in the Kara Kum region, where the remnants of the Seyanto tribe lived. It was in this place that a new ethno-political union of Turkic and Seyanto nomadic tribes could form. S.G. Klyashtorny describes the fifty-year joint history of the Turkic and Sir tribal alliance as follows: the Sirs were loyal to the alliance. Together with the Turks, they rebelled and became formidable enemies of the Tang Empire. In the army of Ilterish Khagan and Tonyukuk, they avenged their compatriots who had been killed by the Uyghurs in the battle of 648. Together with the Turks, they reclaimed the Otyuken region, the land of the Turks and Sirs. After the disintegration of the Turkic and Sir tribal alliance and state in the mid-740s, they shared the fate of the Turks. However, the destiny of the names of both tribes was different (54, 151).

The Turkic ethnonym was preserved for centuries and has come down to us. In the Middle Ages, although it lost its specific ethnic designation, it was known as a political term, representing a large collective image of peoples speaking mutually intelligible languages. The Sir ethnonym is not mentioned in any known sources after 735, but by the second half of the 8th century, the ethnonym Qipchaq-Xifchaq appears in Chinese texts and the first Arab list of Turkic tribes (54, 160).

Explaining the reason for the replacement of the "Sir" ethnic name with "Qipchaq," S.G. Klyashtorny writes: "...the emergence of a new ethnic term was a response to a significant and well-known event that profoundly influenced the fate of the Sir tribes. Such an event, close in time to the period of the runic monuments, was the mass slaughter of the Sirs by the Uyghurs and the Chinese, and the destruction of their state and ruling lineage. The natural reflection of these events was the semantics of the new tribal name" (54, 160).

The word "q y v c a q - q y b c r a q" in the language of ancient Turkic monuments is translated as "unfortunate, unsuccessful." According to S.G. Klyashtorny, the new



ethnonym among the Sir tribes could have arisen with a derogatory meaning (unfortunate, useless) as a protective measure after a devastating defeat by external enemies, possibly more in ritual practice as a name change typical of Turkic-Mongolian religious-mythological thought (belief in the inseparable connection between an object and its name) (54, 161).

For the Uyghurs, it was advantageous to forget the name of the Sirs and, conversely, to introduce their new name with a derogatory meaning. In the monument of Eletmish Bilge Khagan, the tribe that shared power with the Turks was called Qivchaqs (54, 161).

S.G. Klyashtorny writes: A long time passed. The name Qivchaq, which was poorly accepted in ethnic consciousness, and the reasons for its semantic origin were forgotten. A new legend explaining the ethnonym emerged among the tribes included in the Toquz-Oguz union, where the Uyghurs were the majority (54, 162). According to the legend, the mythical Kipchak was the son of one of the military leaders of Oguz Khagan, who called himself the Uyghur Khagan.

According to the legend of Oguz Khagan as given by Rashid al-Din, the Kipchaks were one of the 24 tribes of the Oguz. It is stated here that the Kipchak, Kalaç, and Aqaçeri tribes originated from the people who mixed with Oguz and his lineage (90, 80). The boy, whom Oguz Khagan named Kipchak, and after whom his tribe was named, was born during an unsuccessful campaign against the Itbarak tribe. The boy was found in the hollow of a tree, which is reflected in his name. The word formed from "kobuk" and in Turkic means "hollow tree." Abul Ghazi notes: "In ancient Turkic, a hollow tree was called Kipchak, meaning that the original meaning of the word q u b ç a q - q y v ç a q was a specific object - a hollow, burnt tree"

According to another legend, the boy named Kipchak was born in a place full of trees. To cross a river, Oguz Khagan ordered the trees to be cut down. As they crossed the river on a raft made of trees, Oguz Khagan said to the newborn child: "You, too, be a prince like me, let your name be Kipchak" (62, 65).

S.M. Akhinyanov notes that in these legends about the origin of the Kipchaks, attention should be paid to the direct connection of Kipchak with trees, in other words, the tree and forest directly appear as attributes in the origin of the Kipchaks. Each detail in ancient ethnogenetic legends about the origin of a people has a hidden genetic basis, with hints of real events from the life of a particular ethnic collective in the plot's attributes. The consistent mention of trees and forests in the early narratives of the Kipchaks' ethnic development suggests that their ethnogenesis formed in a place where the forest gradually turned into a forest-steppe zone (14, 55).

Interestingly, Rashid al-Din also mentions a people living in the forest zone alongside the Kipchaks. This people is known as "ağaç-eri" (translated from Turkic as "forest people") (90.82).

The boy named Kipchak was born after Oguz Khagan's unsuccessful campaign against the Itbarak tribe. After a great defeat, Oguz Khagan fled from the battlefield, and there, at the confluence of two large rivers, he settled. On an island formed by the two rivers, a boy was born in the hollow of a tree. To determine the boy's birthplace and consequently the original location of the Kipchak tribe, one needs to identify the place where the Itbarak people lived. According to the legend, the Itbaraks lived beyond Khitai... in inaccessible mountains (39, 43). There is no precise idea about the location of this legendary tribe. Y. Marquart associates them with the region of Volga Bulgaria (77. 115). V.F. Minorsky hypothesizes that the legendary country of the Itbaraks should be sought in the Yenisei area, where the Kyrgyz lived at that time (67, 62).

It is possible that the Kyrgyz are meant under the name Itbarak, as it was they who dealt a significant blow to the Uyghurs and destroyed their state in the mid-9th century. The central Orkhon region reflects the perception of the Itbaraks' victory over Oguz Khagan, who called himself the Uyghur Khagan (88 133).

Based on the location of the Itbaraks' country, the forest-steppe area, filled with trees and considered the cradle of the legendary boy named Kipchak was situated further south.

Therefore, it can be assumed that the initial settlement of the Kipchaks was in the southern foothills of the Sayan-Altai Mountains and the steppes to their south.

After the Uyghurs destroyed the Second Eastern Turkic Khaganate in 744 (which, as previously noted, was led by the Turks and Kipchaks), the main bulk of the former allies was forced to leave the present-day Mongolian steppes. Despite their political failures, the Kipchaks continued their nomadic life in the eastern part of the Kazakh steppes alongside closely related tribes.

The Chinese sinologist Chen Chunmian, a connoisseur of documents about the Turks, refers to chapter 99 of "Beishi" and lists the tribes that lived west of Altai and belonged to the Tele group, considered descendants of the Huns by an 8th-century Chinese geographer. According to his information: north of the Kan state, along the Ade river, lived the Xede, Xetsze, Boxu, Bican, Zhuykhai, Xebisi, Xetso, Ouba, Yemo, and Xeda tribes (34). All of them collectively formed three tumens (i.e., they had 30,000 troops). Since the Kan state (Samarkand or Sogdia) occupied the Amu Darya and Zeravshan valleys, the mentioned Tele tribes lived a nomadic life from Altai to the west and north of Central Asia, in the steppes of Western and Central Kazakhstan. Chen Chunmian writes that "Xebisi" is the Chinese variant of the Qipchaq tribe's name, where the last character "si" is read as "sik" in the Cantonese dialect, restoring the whole construct as Xebisik-Qipsaq (15). Thus, it can be assumed that the name Qipchaq, in addition to existing among the Tele nomadic tribes in the 8th century, also entered Chinese official documents as the Sinicized variant "Xebisi-Qipchaq."

The new wave of migration of the Kipchaks (Seyanto) to the western lands, as reflected in the legend and written tradition of Oguz Khagan, was caused by events in the mid-8th century. The Uyghur and their allied Tele tribes dealt a devastating blow to the Second Eastern Turkic Khaganate (the tribal alliance of the Turks and Sirs), and on its ruins, the Uyghur Khaganate (745-840), one of the largest states of the Middle Ages, emerged, holding political hegemony in the Central Asian steppes for nearly a century. While the ancient Turks mainly became part of the newly formed union's ethnic

composition, the Kipchaks, according to written records and archaeological sources, moved with their main group to the territory of Eastern and Central Kazakhstan (23, 128).

Archaeological research of the burial monuments in the Central Asian region from the Middle Ages has revealed a specific type of burial custom—burying the deceased with their horse. This was characteristic of the nomadic tribes of the Eurasian steppes and directly indicated the leading role of the horse in the economic life of the ethno-political unions in Central Asia. This custom was widespread over a vast area, from the Khangai plateau in the east to Central Kazakhstan in the west, and from the Minusinsk basin in the north to the Tian Shan mountain system in the south.

Ancient Turkic burial customs are recorded in Chinese sources as cremation. When a representative of the Turkic ethnos died, the body was placed in a tent... a horse and sheep were slaughtered and placed in front of the tent as sacrifices... On the appointed day, the deceased's horse and the items they used were burned together with the deceased, the ashes were collected, and at a certain time of the year, they were placed in a grave (25, 160). Although N.Y. Bichurin noted that this described the burial ceremony for noble and wealthy people, it is clear that this was a common custom for both the nobles and ordinary members of Turkic society. Additionally, there is information that the Turks burned the bodies of warriors who died on the battlefield, confirming that cremation was practiced for both nobles and commoners.

However, in the first quarter of the 7th century, Chinese sources indicate a change in burial customs among the Turks—from cremation to burial in the ground. This shift was so unusual to contemporaries that it prompted a remark from the Chinese Emperor Taizong, who accused the Turks of violating their ancestors' customs, which he believed led to the collapse of their state. These records provided the main argument for researchers like S.A. Teploukhov, Y.R. Kyzlasov, Y.P. Potapov, A.D. Grach, and S.I. Weinstein to consider horse burials as Turkic, viewing them as the most characteristic type of archaeological monument. However, it should be noted that another Chinese chronicle states that the last khagan of the First Turkic Khaganate, Helu, was cremated according to

nomadic custom in 634, and five years later, his nephew Heloxu was also cremated according to nomadic custom in 639. Interestingly, these records about the burials of Khagan Helu and Heloxu do not specify the particular forms of their burials under the kurgans (25, 157).

It is likely that the change in burial customs among the Turks was a temporary deviation from ancestral traditions due to extraordinary events: devastating defeats by the Tele tribes, the spread of infectious diseases, and so on. Fearing the spread of the epidemic, the Chinese emperor ordered the leaders to sacrifice wine and dried meat and bury them. The source does not provide information on how they were buried (2, 14).

Regarding the linguistic affiliation of the Kipchaks, the renowned linguist-Turkologist N.A. Baskakov writes: "The Polovtsian (Kuman or Kipchak) language... belongs to the Qipchaq group of the Turkic languages, specifically to the Kipchak-Polovtsian subgroup. This language subgroup, which preserved Kipchak elements, also acquired some common features with the Oghuz and Bulgar languages due to the influence of related languages on Kipchak languages"

Mahmud Kashgari, noting his expertise in Turkic languages, states that both the Kipchaks and Oghuz had a pure Turkic language (4, 66). In another chapter, the medieval philologist does not differentiate much between the Oghuz and Kipchak languages but occasionally provides examples to illustrate the differences. From this, it can be concluded that the linguistic characteristics typical of the Western group of Turkic languages were already observed among both the Kipchaks and Oghuz.

The common phonetic features in the Oghuz and Kipchak language groups are explained not only by the genetic relationship of the Turkic languages but also by several historical factors. The long-term mutual influence of the two language groups began during their joint historical life in Central Asia. There, both tribes—the Oghuz and Kipchaks (Seyanto)—were part of the general ethno-political group of Tele nomadic peoples. Within this union, according to the source, the Kipchaks were distinguished as a special stratum of Tele (83.81). The Oghuz traditions reflected in the legend of Oguz

Khagan note several times the characteristics of the Kipchaks, stating that they belonged to tribes named by Oguz Khagan but not of his lineage. In any case, the languages spoken by representatives of the Oghuz and Kipchak groupings were classified by medieval and modern linguists as part of the Western group of Turkic languages (45.71).

Thus, the information from sources, written records, archaeological research, and linguistic indicators unanimously confirm the inclusion of the Kipchaks in the Turkic ethnic environment. Their ethnogenesis issues should be considered in connection with the origins of the Central Asian Turkic-Tele nomadic ethnoses.

Another viewpoint in Kipchak studies suggests that Dinlin elements—representatives of the ancient Europoid race with light hair and blue eyes—played a significant role in the ethnogenesis of the Kipchaks.

Historical literature holds the view that the Dinlins, during a military expedition by the Hun shanyu Modu in 201 BCE, were subjected to the Huns and formed the northern periphery of the Hun's dominion. L.N. Gumilev concludes that the term Dinlin is multifaceted, referring both to a specific ethnos and, in relation to China, to all northern tribes (from the first millennium BCE to the early first millennium CE). Practically the entire territory of Central Asia, north of the Great Wall of China, was under the control of the Dinlin tribes. Later, related Turkic and Tele tribal units lived in this area (84, 105). The Tele and Dinlins were related. Y.P. Potapov writes that modern Orientalists tend to trace the earliest written form of the name Tele to the Turkic-speaking tribe Tinging (Dinlin) (177, 148). S.M. Akhinjanov makes an interesting point: if the Dinlins were Tele, then the formation of several major peoples of the ancient Turkic period must be linked to their circle—such as the Uyghur, Seyanto, and others (14, 74).

If we assume that the Dinlins were a Tele tribe and the Seyanto (Kipchaks) were one of the related Tele tribal branches, then these hypotheses are already substantiated. Additionally, many researchers' opinions about the Qipchaqs' descent from the Dinlins are based on the physical similarity between the two: like the Dinlins, the Qipchaqs are

considered to have Europoid features. Chinese sources provide information about the physical appearance of the Dinlin tribes.

Unfortunately, there is no reliable information about the physical appearance of the Qipchaqs during their period in Central Asia, only a few direct and indirect references that may relate to their characteristics. It is known that in the Second Eastern Turkic Khaganate, the ruling tribes were the Turks and Qipchaqs, and there was a civil war to consolidate power, especially after the khagan's death. For example, in 716, when Khagan Mochjo was killed by the Bayegu tribe, a struggle began for the vacant throne. The throne was contested by the "blond Turks" and the Mochjo Turks. Thanks to Prince Kultegin, the Turks who had been in power retained the throne and installed Bilgekhán, Mochjo's son, as the khagan, as noted by the Chinese chronicler. Thus, the Mochjo Turks remained in power (1, 112).

Who were the "blond Turks" mentioned in the source? It was certainly not the Toquz-Oghuz (Uyghurs); they could not have been the Karluks, Bayegu, or other peoples under vassal dependence on the Turks. The fact is that before his death, Khagan Mochjo had attacked the Qelolu (Karluk) and other peoples several times, weakening the enemy's strength. Later, this tireless leader of the Turks fought the Toquz-Oghuz along the northern edge of the Great Kum desert. Nine generations were scattered, and finally, the Bayegu were completely defeated at the Dule River (120.78). After defeating the Bayegu tribe, Mochjo, perhaps overconfident

from his numerous victories, was careless and returned, only to be attacked and killed by a Bayegu detachment in a large forest. In any case, the ruling Turkic dynasty at that time had no serious external enemies in the struggle for the throne, except for the allied Seyanto (as indicated in Chinese sources) or the Kipchaks—named "Selingin Stone" or Sir tribal alliance (Sir—mentioned in Tonyukuk's inscription). It appears that the Seyanto-Kipchaks-Sirs tried to take a leading position in the established hierarchy of Turkic and Sir tribes at an opportune moment, but as mentioned earlier, they did not succeed (93.13). From this, it can be concluded that the "blond Turks" mentioned in the

source referred only to the Sir-Seyanto-Qipchaqs, named so because of their hair color, which was blond or a shade of yellow .

The description of the "blond Turks" linked to the Kipchak-Seyanto in the Turkic Khaganate is confirmed by the following remark from the 7th-century Chinese writer Yan Shiqun: "The Usun are distinguished from all the tribes of the Western lands by their more distinct appearance. The present-day Xiongnu (Turks), with blue eyes and red beards, are particularly descendants of the Usun tribes". Let us note the existence of a people with such an appearance in the 7th century. In these areas, it was the Seyanto-Kipchak tribes living a nomadic life under vassal rights within the Western Turkic Khaganate in the 6th-7th centuries. The Chinese source "Qanmu" also states that to the northwest of China lived a people rich in horses called Kincha (Kipchak). These people had blue eyes and yellow (red) hair (25.157).

The unanimity of unrelated and chronologically separated sources regarding the appearance of this people indicates that the Kipchaks, or at least a certain part of them, indeed had distinctive external features that differed from the surrounding peoples. This leads to the conclusion that the Kipchaks bore traces of Europoid mixture, noted in the sources primarily by the color of their eyes (blue, green, not just black) and their light-colored hair—blond, light-red, or fair. Hence, when the Kipchaks appeared on the borders of the ancient Russian principalities in the mid-11th century, they were known in Russian chronicles as Polovtsians, likely due to their appearance.

A. Kunik first suggested that the word "Polovtsians" derived from the ancient Slavic word "plava"—straw-colored, hence pale, or straw-colored (60, 18).

The theory about the origin of the word "Polovtsians" proposed by A. Kunik is one of the arguments supporting the hypothesis that the Polovtsians were representatives of the Europoid race with light hair in the Asian continent. This theory has existed since the time of Klapproth and Abel-Rémusat. In Russia, G.Y. Grum-Grzhimailo supported this theory. Although he did not directly study the history of the Kipchak Polovtsians, he developed his hypothesis about the existence of a fair-haired race in Asia, proving that the



Kipchaks were the western branch of the Dinlins, an ancient Europoid race living in Asia. The western branch of the Dinlins mixed with the nomadic population of Kazakhstan and became known as Qipchaqs. The Polovtsians were mainly composed of Kipchaks and Kanglys (2, 14).

N.A. Aristov had already expressed a similar view, concluding from the "Qanmu" Chinese source that the fair-haired part of the Qipchaqs should be explained by their mixing with the western Dinlins.

During 1937-1939, D.A. Rasovsky published several interesting articles about the Polovtsians, proposing the thesis of the Qipchaq-Polovtsians having light hair (180.118). Following them, M.Y. Artamonov and L.N. Gumilev indicated that the Kipchaks were descendants of the western Dinlins, from whom the Polovtsians inherited their light-colored hair

As already noted, not only Russian chronicles identified the Kipchaks, likely reflecting their appearance in their names. In Western European, Byzantine, and Georgian sources, they were referred to differently in the languages of those peoples: Kumans, Cumans, Valans, Plaves, Khardians. All these names, referring to the same people, were primarily translated as "yellow," "pale-yellow," or "red."

It seems that the appearance of this tribe was so different from other nomadic peoples that those who encountered and reported them, independently of each other, gave the Kipchaks the same name, highlighting their unusual appearance and hair color.

Many researchers, including I.G. Dobrodomov, disagree with the idea that the Polovtsians' name derived from their appearance. He believes that the color meaning in the name Polovtsians is symbolic. It is known that the Turks used color names to denote the cardinal directions in two systems—Chinese, Uyghur, and pagan-Lamaist. According to the first system, yellow represents the center, while in the second system, yellow represents the north. Discussing the use of color symbols as a determinant in ethnonyms, I.G. Dobrodomov argues that in Turkic ethnonymy, the color yellow was not used to

denote skin or clothing color and could denote horse color. In his view, the color meaning in this ethnonym serves as a symbolic name for the cardinal direction (84, 76).

Disagreeing with this view, Akhinjanov writes: "While not denying the possibility of using the word 'yellow' as a symbol of the cardinal direction for a specific people, in the case of the Kipchaks, it is unacceptable because the word 'yellow' in other non-Turkic languages has a calque and in these languages is used to refer to a specific people, reflecting their appearance, not the cardinal direction" (14).

Al-Omari's remark on this matter is interesting: "In ancient times, this state was the land of the Kipchaks, but when the Tatars took over, the Kipchaks submitted to them. The Tatars mingled with them and intermarried, and the land influenced their physical characteristics, making them look just like the Kipchaks".

As we can see, the ethnic type of the Kipchaks differed from the Mongoloid type typical of the Tatars. It is known that in Asia, the Dinlin tribes represented the Europoid type in terms of physical characteristics. Therefore, it can be assumed that the Dinlins played a significant role in the racial genesis of the Kipchaks. In Chinese chronicles, the name Dinlins refers to tribes similar in their primary economic forms, namely nomadic animal husbandry and hunting. It is possible that their differences lay in their languages. As mentioned earlier, if the Dinlins were related to the Tele tribes, they also included Turkic-speaking tribes.

Another concept in historiography dedicated to the origin of the Kipchaks exists. The author of this concept is the prominent German orientalist I. Marquart, who published a monograph entirely devoted to the history of the Kipchaks in 1914. In this work, I. Marquart also systematizes previous views on the Kipchak issue. According to I. Marquart, the Kipchaks were a separated branch of the Mongols. He believed that the Kipchaks went through three main stages of Mongolization .

According to I. Marquart, the ancestors of the Kipchaks were the Kimeks who lived in the upper reaches of the Irtysh River. In the 7th century, the Kimeks were subdued by some Mongol, specifically Tatar, tribes .

In the early 10th century, the name "Kimak" disappears, and I. Marquart explains this by stating that they were defeated by another Mongol-origin tribe—the Kuns, who led the movement of the Kipchak-Kimaks to the west, to the southern Russian steppes in the 11th century. The German researcher attributes the organizational power of this great westward migration of nomads solely to the Mongol ruling circle. I. Marquart could not find direct historical evidence of the Kimeks' subjugation to the Kuns and limited himself to several indirect pieces of information. Marquart considers the Kuns to be purely Mongol .

It should be noted that I. Marquart's hypothesis about the Mongol origin of the Kipchaks has been repeatedly criticized in the works of V.V. Bartold and P. Pelliot.

### *Early History of the Kipchaks*

The ethno-political history of two closely related tribal entities of the eastern part of the Eurasian steppes—the Kimeks and the Kipchaks—emerged in the second half of the first millennium CE. This history, as recorded in various sources, was closely intertwined with the ethnic processes that occurred throughout Central Asia, Southern Siberia, modern Kazakhstan, and the steppes of Eastern Europe. This history cannot be examined without considering these connections. It appears that if there are two different names for tribal entities expressed in the sources as "Kimek" and "Kipchak," then they must represent two completely different peoples. However, in the study of history, the Kipchaks and Kimeks have not been so fortunate. First, the Turkic origin of the Kipchaks and Kimeks is accepted as an axiom in the current level of historical knowledge. Second, it is well known that there is a traditional view in Kipchak studies from the earliest times to the present that the Kimeks and Kipchaks are the same people, and any differences are purely chronological, meaning the Kimeks came first, followed by the Kipchaks.

N.A. Aristov wrote that if the Kimeks are not the Cumans, then they must at least be allies of the Kipchak lineage (14, 88). I. Marquart called the Kipchaks the western branch of the Kimeks . According to V.V. Bartold, the historical significance of the Kimeks lies

in the fact that many Kipchak people emerged from their environment L. Potapov believed that the Kipchaks constituted the western branch of the Kimeks (87, 171).

One of the arguments that led most authors to this conclusion is the mention of a specific province under the name "Andar al-Kifchak" in the country of the Kimeks in the 10th-century anonymous Persian author's work "Hudud al-Alam" .However, S.M. Akhinjanov writes: "The fact that some Kipchaks and Kimeks lived in the same region only indicates the existence of special political interactions between them" (14, 94). For example, the earliest eastern author, Ibn Khordadbeh, mentions the Kipchaks by this name and lists them among other tribes, including the Kimeks as a separate independent tribe (40, 58). In such cases, it is necessary to recall some characteristics of ethnic naming widely spread among nomadic peoples. One of these characteristics is that people from different lineages and tribes are called by the name of the ruling tribe or lineage; in a certain period, the most powerful tribe makes the subordinate ethnic names somewhat forgotten. Naturally, based on this, we cannot claim that the same principle applies to the connection between the terms "Kimek" and "Kipchak. However, this characteristic must also be taken into account.

The most complete and reliable information about the Kimeks is provided by the 11th-century Persian author Gardizi in his work "Zayn al-Akhbar." Here, the genealogical basis of the Kimeks' origin is presented with the plot of a dragon, a woman, and a river. Gardizi writes: "The origin of the Kimeks is as follows. The chief of the Tatars died, leaving behind two sons: the elder son inherited the kingdom, and the younger son, named Shad, became envious. Shad attempted to assassinate his elder brother but failed. Fearing for his life, he fled with his slave-concubine and came to a place with a great river, many trees, and abundant game. There they set up camp and settled. Everyday Shad and his slave went hunting together, surviving on game meat and making clothes from sable and squirrel skins. Later, seven relatives from the Tatars joined them: Imi, Imek, Tatar, Bayander, Kipchak, Lanikaz, and Aclad. These people grazed their master's flocks. There were no pastures left where they grazed. Searching for new pastures, they came to the hill

where Shad was. Seeing them, the slave came out and said, 'Irtish,' meaning 'Stop.' Thus, the river was named Irtish. Recognizing the slave, everyone stopped and set up camp. Shad returned from the hunt with a large catch and hosted them. They stayed there until winter... When the snow melted and the earth became colorful, they sent a man to the Tatar camp to bring news about the tribe. Upon arrival, the man found the area deserted and devoid of people. Enemies had plundered and killed the entire tribe. The survivors descended from the mountains and came to Shad. He informed his friends about Shad's situation and location. They all went to Irtish, greeted Shad as their leader, and began to honor him. Hearing this news, others also came, and 700 people gathered. For a long time, they remained in Shad's service. Then, when they increased in number, they scattered in the mountains and formed seven tribes named after the mentioned seven men. All these Kimeks were known for their bad morals, stinginess, and lack of hospitality. Once, Shad, standing with his people by the Irtish, heard a voice: 'Shad, did you see me in the water?' Shad saw nothing but floating hair on the water's surface. He tied his horse, went into the water, and grabbed the hair, discovering it was his wife, Khatan. He asked her: 'How did you fall?' She replied: 'A dragon (crocodile) grabbed me from the riverbank.' The Kimeks revere and worship this river, saying: 'The river is the god of the Kimeks'.

Although the plot provided by Gardizi is quite fantastic, it has a specific basis. First, the Kimeks were newcomers to the Irtish, having separated from the Tatar ethnic environment and come here. The first information about the Tatar ethnic environment emerged in the territory of northeastern Mongolia and Manchuria. Second, it was only upon reaching the Irtish that the Kimeks created the ethno-political union named after the eponyms of the seven ancestors mentioned in Gardizi's legend. Among these tribes, Gardizi also mentions the Kipchaks and Yemeks, whose main homelands were the Altai Mountains and the upper reaches of the Irtish in the 6th-7th centuries. During the power of the Western Turkic Khaganate, the hunting economy of the Yemeks in the Altai Mountains formed the northern periphery of the Khaganate, and after its collapse in 702, they scattered. The Kipchaks, known as "Seyanto," initially joined the Western Turkic

state. Between 630-647, they even created their own state union, which was later defeated and destroyed under the joint attacks of the Chinese state and the Toquz Oghuz. The defeated Seyanto- Kipchaks split into several parts and scattered across different parts of the Central Asian steppes and plateaus, each meeting different fates. At the end of the 7th century, the Seyanto tribes that lived a nomadic life in the Khangai region of Central Mongolia supported the Turkic uprising and, together with them, formed the basis of the re-establishment of the Second Eastern Turkic Khaganate. Another part of the Seyanto, numbering 70,000 people, fled west, settling in the steppes of Central and Eastern Kazakhstan. Weakened by the blow they had received, they became an easy target for the new political force in the form of a tribe settled along the Irtish. In Gardizi's legend, this period of their history is likely reflected in the following phrases: "They greeted Shad as their leader and began to honor him. Other people also came, and 700 people gathered. For a long time, they remained in Shad's service." The numbers 7, 700, and 700,000, which are associated with the Kimek-Kipchak tribes, are clearly evident. As V.V. Bartold noted in his publication of Gardizi's genealogical tale about the Kimeks, in ancient Turkic epitaphs, 700 was considered the number of people necessary to create an independent tribe. The information provided suggests that Gardizi's account of the early formation of the Kimek ethno-political union centered around the Irtish is not as fantastical as it first appears. It reflects real events that took place in the western part of the Jungar steppes and Eastern Kazakhstan during the Turkic Khaganate (17, 44).

The episode Gardizi provides, where the Kimek leader speaks with his wife floating as a hair figure in the river they worship, is also not accidental. Some peoples have a belief that the dragon (or snake) is the first creator of everything on earth. The dragon separated the sky from the earth, created the sun, and humans, but remained the god of the underworld. This belief is associated with the deity of pastoralism, the foundation of all beings; in other words, the dragon (snake) is not only equal to the earthly goddess but also has a direct expression in the woman—Khatan, the creator and mother of humanity, in water—without which any life ceases to exist (19).

By deifying representatives of the underworld pantheon (dragons and snakes), the Kimeks considered themselves close to their image and should have been called the "snake people." They brought these genealogical notions with them to the Irtish from their initial homeland, the Mongolian ethnic environment (64, 42).

Gardizi's information about the original homeland of the Kimeks being east of the Irtish, somewhere on the eastern borders of Mongolia, is not unique. This information is confirmed by other Arab-Persian authors (65.45).

It appears that the Kimek ethnonym was known only to a certain group of Muslim authors. There is still no certainty about how this form could have sounded in the language of their contemporaries. It seems the term referred to some people, and their "book name" was Kimek. Moreover, there is a tradition that the word Kimek was used to refer to a part of the population of medieval Kazakhstan and nearby southern Siberian regions, later the southern Russian steppes (58, 176).

Interestingly, Mahmud Kashgari, a 11th-century author who knew the political situation and economy of the Kazakh steppes in the early second millennium CE from his own observations, said nothing about the Kimeks. Ancient Turkic runic monuments and Chinese sources are also silent on this matter (140, 54). Mahmud Kashgari only knew of a tribe called Kay on the right bank of the Irtish, where Gardizi and the unknown author of "Hudud al-Alam" placed their Kimeks. Mahmud Kashgari was also aware of the Yemek tribe living on the banks of the Irtish (38, 112). He even cites a poem by an unknown poet of the Karakhanid period about them. Mahmud Kashgari places the Tatars in proximity to these two tribes. In other words, we encounter the same tribes listed in Gardizi's list. The difference is that instead of Kimeks, Mahmud Kashgari mentions the Kan tribe. Another 11th-century author, Al-Biruni, places the Kumak tribe in the Irtish basin area, corresponding to the location of the Kimeks (25, 167).

It appears that the Kimeks, in addition to their book name, were known in certain sources as the "snake people" (Kan in the Mongolian variant) . Since the Kimeks spent a significant part of their history in close association with Turkic-speaking peoples,

primarily the Kipchaks and Yemeks, and according to the sources, completely merged with them, this Kan people must have had a Turkish equivalent in addition to the Mongolian-language ethnonym, making them well-known among neighboring Turkic-speaking peoples. However, in the medieval history of Kazakhstan, the term "cilan" has not yet been identified as an expression of a specific ethnic group in Turkish lexicon, but it is still used to refer to a part of the Bashkir Kipchaks as "yelan" (19).

Thus, there must have been a word not preserved in modern Turkic languages that allowed contemporaries to easily recognize the Sham tribe, meaning the Kimeks, naturally apart from their Mongolian-language ethnonym—Kai. This word, used in the ethnopolitical life of the early second millennium CE as an ethnic expression of a certain part of the Kipchaks, was the term "Uran." For example, one source mentions Kipchakkhan Alp-Kara Uran and his compatriots as Uran people. His son Kiran is more historically known as the father of Terken Khatun, the wife of Khwarezmshah Tekesh and mother of Khwarezmshah Muhammad. According to Rashid al-Din, she was from the Uran tribe (90.87). In the 13th-century Turkic-Arabic dictionary, known in literature as the Khoutana dictionary, compiled based on the Kipchak, Oghuz, and to some extent Karluk, Uyghur languages, the word "Uran" is found and translated as "snake" (53; 17).

As we move further west from the territory of Kazakhstan, which was the main habitation area of the Kimek and Qipchaq tribes at the turn of the first and second millennia, and observe their rather complex settlements, we inevitably notice that the geography they inhabited coincides with toponyms based on the names Uran and Kay. For example, in Bashkortostan, in the region where the Kimek-Qipchaq entities played a significant role in the ethnogenesis of the Bashkirs before the Mongol invasions, there are hydronyms named Uran. For instance, the two streams of Sakmara are called Bolshoy Uran and Maly Uran, and in the 18th century, two lakes near the city of Miass beyond the Ural Mountains were called Uranga and Urangach (62, 410).

Hydronyms and oikonyms based on the roots Uran and Oran are also found in the South Caucasus region. In the Republic of Azerbaijan, there is a river named Uran, and in



the Lerik district of the republic, there is a village named Oran. Additionally, the medieval city of Beylagan (5th-8th centuries) was locally known as Öränqala. The emergence of these toponyms in Azerbaijan can be linked to the migration of Kimek-Qipchaq groups from Central Asia and the Dеш-i Qipchaq, both from the south and the north. As noted by R.A. Huseynov, there was a relatively massive migration of Turks to various zones of Western Asia, including Azerbaijan, in the early 11th-12th centuries, and speakers of the Qipchaq language appeared there in the 12th century, associated with the Atabegs Eldegiz, who were of Qipchaq origin (32, 375).

From the second half of the 11th century, the Kipchaks became known to Georgian chroniclers (28.113). Georgian sources provide extensive information about Georgian-relations. In 1118, King David IV of Georgia brought approximately 40,000 Kipchaks warriors with their families from the Alanian region to strengthen his military forces against the Turks-Seljuks and local Georgian feudal separatists. The newly acquired military forces were settled in the eastern and southeastern parts of the Georgian kingdom (50, 48). In these regions of Georgia, toponyms not characteristic of the Georgian lexicon, such as Uran and Ak Uran, were recorded. There is no doubt that these non-Georgian toponyms indicate the presence of certain groups of the Kipchaks ethno-political union. To bind the Kipchaks more firmly to their new lands, David began to spread Christianity among them, and according to the source, more Kipchaks converted to Christianity daily (39). Moreover, subsequent Georgian kings also recruited Kipchaks military units into their service. They called them from the steppes of the North Caucasus, where they likely had allied relations with the local population, such as the Alans. During the reign of King George III (1156-1184), several tens of thousands of Kipchaks were again resettled to Georgia. In Georgian chronicles, they are referred to as the "new Kipchaks" (18, 52). The Kipchaks are often mentioned in the battles of Queen Tamar (1184-1213). For example, during the armed rebellion of the western Georgian feudal lords, the Kipchaks were among those who remained loyal to the queen (46). During the Mongol invasion and later political events in the South Caucasus, sources provide information about the active role of

Kipchaks tribes in various events. Many Kipchaks served in the armies of the Atabegs of Ganja, South Azerbaijan, and the emirs of Derbent, who were at war with Georgia. When Khwarezmshah Jalal ad-Din appeared in the Caucasus, the Kipchaks actively fought against him on the side of the Georgians. They also supported him as an ally in the capture of the Derbent pass and the fortress of Derbent (55, 123; 74, 237)

The last written records of the Kipchaks in the Caucasus date back to the early 14th century (66, 61), during the participation of Georgian rulers in internal feudal relations. However, memories and toponyms related to them have been preserved in Georgian folk sayings and place names.

Naturally, if the Kipchaks -Polovtsy had not felt the support of their related tribes in the steppes of the North Caucasus, they would not have been able to participate so actively in the historical life of most peoples of the South Caucasus at the beginning of the second millennium CE. They likely arrived in these areas in the late 11th century, displacing the Pechenegs (62, 178). Initially, they entered the new lands peacefully. By the early 12th century, when borders between the Kipchaks and the Adygs and Alans were established in the Kuban, Terek, and other areas, political stability was achieved in the North Caucasus steppes, and mutual rapprochement began, which both sides were interested in. The Georgian rulers' policies also played a significant role in this reconciliation. The chronicle states: "The Ossetians (Alans) and the Kipchaks, at the invitation of King David, exchanged hostages, made mutual agreements, and established peace and love among themselves" (63, 171).

The initial appearance of the Tatar-Mongols in the Caucasus and the northern part of the Caucasus is well-documented by historians. Of particular interest are the events of 1222, in which the Kipchaks and their Alan allies faced the troops of Genghis Khan's experienced and prominent commander, Subedei Bahadur. This alliance was so strong that the Mongols initially could not defeat them and resorted to cunning. They decided to break the Kipchaks Alan alliance by sending envoys to the Kipchaks and cleverly exploiting claims of common origin and genetic kinship. The Mongol envoys told the Kipchaks: "We

and you are one people and one tribe, while the Alans are strangers to us. We will make an agreement with you..." (42, 330). Surprisingly, the Kipchaks listened to the Mongols and abandoned their allies.

Sources report that the Mongols first defeated the Alans and then attacked the Kipchaks. The attack was unexpected for the Kipchaks, and they fled without fighting, scattering across the steppes. Many of them gathered and went to the city of Derbent in Shirvan, while others fled northwest to the area between the Don and Dnieper rivers, returning to their main territories.

According to various sources, a Kipchaks tribal union formed in the Kazakh steppes and northern regions around the 11th-12th centuries, led by khans. Information about the establishment of a Kipchaks ruling dynasty in the Kazakh steppes is provided by the official Chinese historical work Yuan-shi . These sources confirm the existence of a large Kipchaks tribal union in the Kazakh steppes in the 11th-12th centuries, headed by a royal dynasty from the Ilbari tribe, established in the southern Ural plateau and the steppes of western Kazakhstan. It should be noted that the Kipchaks, led by the Ilbari tribe, inhabited the same region where, according to "Hudud al-Alam," an independent Kipchaks province was noted as early as the mid-9th century, separate from the Kimeks (5, 100; 6, 83).

The rapid development of nomadic pastoralism and the increase in livestock required new pastures, stimulating the unification of various scattered tribes into an alliance, primarily against the Oghuz. After the turbulent events caused by the migration of nomadic tribes in the early 11th century, political stability began to be established in the steppes from the mid-11th century. The vast steppe space from the eastern Irtysh to the Black Sea steppes gradually came under the control of Kipchaks -Polovtsian khans. By the end of the 11th century, they occupied Yangikent, Jand, and other cities in the Syr Darya valley. M. Kashgari's map marks the Aral Sea region and the eastern coast of the Caspian Sea as the Kipchaks' place of residence (47). In the early 12th century, the city of Saksin, located in the lower Volga region, was constantly attacked by the Kipchaks and Yemeks. It is no coincidence that when describing the biography of Kutb ad-Din,

Muhammad Juzjani noted that he had to protect the borders of his state from the pagan Bulgars and Kipchaks. He defended his lands and did not think about offensive operations against the inhabitants of the Desht-i Kipchaks.

For the rulers of these states, having such a dangerous neighbor on their northern and eastern borders was very concerning, and they made every effort to weaken their neighbors' power.

### ***The Appearance of the Kipchaks in the Southern Russian Steppes and Kipchak-Rus Relations***

Historians have diverse opinions and theories regarding the arrival of the Kipchaks in the Southern Russian and North Caucasus steppes. The primary debate is not about the century of their arrival—most agree it was the 11th century—but the precise chronology is still disputed. Another issue is the specific regions in the North Caucasus where the Kipchaks settled and their distribution areas. Unfortunately, there is still no clarity on this matter, partly because the Kipchak problem in North Caucasus history remains unresolved. Various factors contribute to this, including the reluctance of historians of North Caucasian peoples to acknowledge their Kipchak roots. Despite Russian and other European historians noting the Turkic language of the North Caucasian peoples, historians associated with the Karachay, Circassian, Balkar, and Kumyk peoples often seek their origins in Alans, As, Cimmerians, and other Turkic or Iranian-speaking tribes. This mindset stems from the anti-Turkish atmosphere of the former Soviet ideology and the desire of researchers to see their ethnic group among the indigenous peoples of the Caucasus. More on this will be discussed later. Now, let's return to the Southern Russian steppes.

Some of the earliest discussions about the Kipchaks' presence in the Russian steppes suggest their initial appearance around 1030. Turkish researcher Fakhraddin Kirzioğlu supports this view, as does Russian historian Y. Evstigneev, who dates the beginning of the Kipchak migration to 1029 and its completion to 1055. Proponents of this view base their arguments on Arab and Georgian historical sources. For instance, Ibn Khordadbeh's

work mentions the term *Dasht-i Kipchak* and describes its geography (given in the mid-11th century), indicating the Kipchaks' consolidation in these areas took some time. Georgian sources also support this, noting that the Kipchaks were known even before their first diplomatic contacts with the Russians.

Another group of historians, relying more on archaeological findings, cautiously suggests that the Kipchaks first appeared in the North Caucasus and Southern Russian steppes in the late 10th or early 11th centuries. This group includes Pletnyova, Klyashtorny, and Kumekov. Pletnyova, through her study of burial monuments and stone statues found around Azov and the lower Don regions, dates these artifacts to the 10th-11th centuries. However, there is a problem since Russian chronicles date the Kipchaks' presence in these areas to 1055. This discrepancy raises doubts about Pletnyova's conclusions. Another issue is the relatively few Kipchak burial and archaeological sites in the North Caucasus. Nevertheless, historians generally agree that the Kipchaks played a significant role in the ethnic processes of the North Caucasus between the 11th and 14th centuries.

Pletnyova suggests that the Kipchaks may have mixed with the local Turkic and non-Turkic ethnic groups of the Caucasus. Additionally, the Kipchaks did not migrate as a single ethnic group. Despite their political and cultural dominance, there were numerous other tribes among the migrants. Klyashtorny, referencing Chinese and Turkish sources, confirms Pletnyova's findings.

Historians generally agree that Russian chroniclers' attention to the Kipchaks is primarily due to political reasons. Kazakh historian Akhinzhanov provides a detailed account of the Kipchak migration to the Russian steppes. Analyzing Mahmud al-Kashgari's information on Kipchak settlements, he notes that al-Kashgari described the land from the Irtysh River to the Volga River as the Kipchaks' homeland, suggesting they had lived there for a long time. Akhinzhanov dates the Kipchaks' direct movement to the Russian steppes to around 1030.

In Russian chronicles, the Kipchaks, referred to as "Polovtsians," first appear in 1055 in the Hypatian Codex. The first Kipchak khan mentioned is Bolush, who made peace with Vsevolod and then returned to the Kipchaks. It is believed that the Kipchaks were pursuing the Torks at that time.

The origin of the term "Polovtsian" is also debated among historians. Polish historian Matfey Mekhovski, in the early 16th century, suggested that "Polovtsian" meant "hunter" or "robber" in Russian, reasoning that the Polovtsians often raided the Russians. A.A. Kunik proposed that the term meant "blond" or "fair-haired."

In 1060, the Kipchaks launched their first attack on the Russian steppes. Chernigov prince Svyatoslav, with his druzhina, defeated the Kipchak forces, killing many of them and drowning others in the Snov River.

In January-February 1061, the Kipchaks returned. The battles led by Chernigov and Pereyaslav princes Svyatoslav and Vsevolod indicated that the Kipchaks lived in the steppes around the Don River.

The next campaign to the southeastern lands occurred in 1068. This time, along the Alte River (Pereyaslavl principality), the combined forces of Iziaslav, Svyatoslav, and Vsevolod Yaroslavich clashed with the Kipchaks. However, the Rus-Slav forces were defeated.

During this period, the western branch of the Kipchaks, known as the Cumans, also developed. They quickly settled, formed, and strengthened in the region between the Dnieper and Dniester rivers. The Cuman-Kipchaks began transitioning from a nomadic lifestyle to a more sedentary one, engaging in agriculture.

The 1071 chronicle indicates that Kipchak warriors came from Rostov and Neiatin, located on the right bank of the Rosa River, a tributary of the Dnieper. The right bank of the Rosa was covered with dense forests, making access difficult. It was only possible to approach the river via the path along the Dnieper. The events of 1071 were likely related to these geographical challenges.

In the dry days of 1092, the Cuman-Kipchak army launched another attack, capturing western Rosa towns like Priluki and Posechen. They formed military alliances among themselves and collaborated with Rus prince Vasilko Rostislavich in their raids.

The Kipchaks expanded their territories by settling uninhabited lands, though this was not without challenges. People constantly struggled with poverty, drought, and harsh winters.

The great migrations connected the fragmented ancient world, making its division impossible as easterners and westerners united. Fierce battles with enemies ensued, but the Don region fights were unique. The Kipchaks' reputation as fierce warriors was well-known in Europe.

By the late 11th century, life in the Eastern European steppes stabilized. The Kipchaks began adopting a sedentary lifestyle, though only the wealthy continued nomadism. The poor engaged in agriculture and learned crafts. However, as some Kipchaks gained wealth, they moved to new territories.

Permanent winter quarters were established in the more fertile northern Don basin, allowing for the placement of idols and kurhans (burial mounds) for ancestors. Family cemeteries began to emerge.

The constant movement of large Kipchak armies made them practically unassailable. Throughout the 11th century, the Russians (Varangians) never penetrated the Kipchak migrations.

In 1111 and 1116, Russian warriors managed to capture some Kipchak cities.

Some Kipchaks living along the Don moved to the Dnieper region, where their lands were taken by Khan Bonyak's forces. Bonyak, along with Khan Tugorkan, attacked both Russian lands and Byzantium. Despite their strength and political activity, they lost their former power and influence by the late 11th and early 12th centuries.

In 1107, Bonyak and Sharukan led a campaign against the Pereyaslavl principality, approaching the city of Lubna with a large force and camping on the left bank of the Tula River. Svyatopolk and Vladimir launched a surprise attack on the Kipchak forces, killing

many, including Bonyak's brother Taaz. Suqorxan and his brothers were captured, while Sharukan barely escaped.

By the mid-12th century, all routes led the Kipchaks towards the Dnieper. A 1152 chronicle states: "All Kipchak lands lie between the Itil (Volga) and Dnieper." These lands' borders extended from the Sula and Orel rivers in the north, the Don and Itil rivers in the east, the North Caucasus, Crimea, and Azov steppes in the south, and the Ingul and Dnieper rivers in the west.

Until the 1160s-1170s, no major political union existed among the Kipchaks. They were divided into small armies, with the more influential ones like the Toksobi, Yeltuk, and Burchevich clans mentioned in Russian chronicles. These groups raided Russian principalities annually, with some even gaining notoriety in the East. Archaeologists identified Kipchak habitation sites based on the number of stone statues and kurhans. Among these, the Burchevich clan stood out, as the name "böri" means "wolf" in Turkic, suggesting they lived around the Volchye (wolf) River.

The rise of the Burchevichs is closely linked to Khan Bonyak, who served as both military leader and shaman in his youth. Combining military and religious roles was characteristic of the steppe culture. After prolonged conflicts, by the late 1070s-early 1080s, the Kipchaks sought permission from the Kievan prince to settle and engage in nomadism in border areas. However, a 1093 chronicle indicates that Kipchak tribes had already settled around Torchesk on the right bank of the Dnieper 10-15 years earlier, showing they had begun sedentary life before making such requests.

Federate Turkic-speaking tribes lived in Pereyaslavl and Chernigov principalities, later handed over to the Russians. Rich pastures and meadows existed in areas like Varina, Driyatina, and Ksnyatin on the right bank of the Sula River. These lands were home to the more powerful Kipchak tribes (federates).

One such tribe in the Dnieper region was the Bayandur clan, referred to as "Berendey" in Russian chronicles. A 1097 chronicle notes their wide distribution in Russia. The Bayandurs (Berendeys) settled in Vladimir-Suzdal lands, with places still



bearing their names today, such as Berendeyev Sloboda, Berendeyev Station, and Berendeyev Swamp.

Russian historians believe that Russian princes played a significant role in shaping the Kipchaks' nomadic lifestyle. For instance, S.A. Pletnyova notes that the wise and foresighted Russian prince Vladimir Monomakh stood out in Kipchak history. Monomakh, after defeating the Kipchaks on the Sutin River, brought other Turkic tribes to the steppe. In 1117, the Belavezhans built a fortress city on the Russian Chernigov border. Thus, Monomakh created a border defense against the Kipchaks using their own people. They adopted a new form of nomadism, maintaining old routes while moving to winter pastures in the plains and summer pastures in the highlands.

In the 1140s, all the nomadic tribes in Poroqya took the first steps towards forming a new ethnic union. Despite remembering their ethnic origins, they created a new unity, including Pechenegs (1151-1162), Turpeys (1150), Kalpichs (1160), and Bastis (1170s). However, two major alliances—Dnepr and Don Kipchaks—were more powerful and organized. These alliances maintained connections with tribes along the Azov Sea coast, aiding each other when needed. Thus, two significant unions, comparable in size to Russian principalities and European kingdoms, emerged in the steppe. Russian historian B.A. Rybakov identified two "white" and "black" Cuman-Kipchak unions. Dnepr Kipchaks were more dominant, with famous khans like Tokle, Izay, Osoluk, and Kobak.

The Don Kipchaks were led by Khan Sharukan, succeeded by his son Sirchan and later Oturaq Khan. Oturaq married a Georgian princess, and their son Konchak Khan grew up to be a notable leader. In the early 1170s, Konchak Khan led the Don tribal union, with his forces gathering around the Tora River (mid-Don region). Russian princes attempted to fight this stronger enemy.

In 1185 and 1191, two campaigns were launched against the Don Kipchaks, led by Northern Novgorod prince Igor Svyatoslavich. In the 1185 battle near the Kalka River, Russian forces suffered a devastating defeat, with Prince Igor caught in a trap. Igor was

severely defeated by the southern Samara Kipchaks, Burchevichs from the west, and Khan Konchak's Kazakhs from the east.

Thus, the Dnepr and Don Kipchak tribal unions became the most powerful entities in the steppe. During that period, they were rarely found around the Volga. However, in the mid-13th century, they migrated to the Volga region, clashing with the Ryazan princes. The Lower Volga city of Saksin, a trade hub, was inhabited by Khazars, Guz (Uzes), and Kipchaks.

Reviewing the course of Russian-Kipchak wars and the geographical areas of battles reveals several issues. Firstly, the primary clashes between the Kipchaks and Russians occurred around the Pereyaslavl principality, despite Russian chronicles mentioning Kipchak raids on Kiev and other inner Russian principalities. Secondly, Russian military campaigns and battles with the Kipchaks mainly took place around Crimea and along the lower Don and Dnieper rivers. To understand this, we need to examine the political situation from the collapse of the Khazar Khaganate in the North Caucasus to the Kipchaks' migration.

Thus, researchers agree that the Kipchaks are of Turkic origin, with their homeland in the Altai Mountains and the Yenisei River basin. The Kipchaks demonstrated early political activity, forming political entities from early times. Initially mentioned as Seyanto, later Kimak, and eventually Kipchak and Cuman, they established large political unions. In the 1050s, they displaced Pechenegs, Guz, and other Turkic tribes, creating a significant political union spanning the steppes from present-day Kazakhstan to the Southern Russian steppes. The Kipchaks maintained active relations with Russian princes, engaging in extensive wars, not as invaders but as defenders against the expansionist policies of the Kievan Rus and later Russian princes.

*Ethno-political Situation in the North Caucasus During the Migration of the Kipchaks in the 9th-11th Centuries*

With the weakening of the Khazar Khaganate, the ethno-political situation in the North Caucasian steppes changed radically. The Khazar Khaganate, with its military

might, not only prevented foreign invasions into the North Caucasus territories but also facilitated the normal development of local ethnic processes. However, these local ethnic processes, although clandestine, contributed to the formation of strong tribal unions, ultimately leading to the strengthening of independence tendencies among these tribes. These processes also resulted in the weakening of the Khazar Khaganate.

From the 940s, the first to break away from the Khazar Khaganate was Samandar (29,189). Although the rulers of Samandar outwardly maintained loyalty to the Khazars, they already participated independently in political processes. The rulers of Samandar bore the title "Il-teber." Arab sources referred to the territories subordinated to the city as Haydan (29,169). This information comes from sources like Masudi, Ibn Rushd, and Ibn al-Athir. Ibn Rushd, in general, referred to these territories as Haydan, completely omitting the name Samandar. Minorsky translated this term as "Haydak" (29,144). According to Masudi, the Turkish ruler of Samandar bore the title "salifan" (28,78). Arab sources from the 10th century mention a ruler of Samandar named Alp Ilutver. The rulers of Samandar conducted active internal and external policies. According to Masudi, in 943, the ruler of Samandar, despite being dependent on the Khazar ruler, converted to Islam and even traced his lineage back to the Arab Qahtanite dynasty. This step indicated that the ruler of Samandar was no longer dependent on the Khazar state. Arab sources mention the independent rule of Samandar since the late 9th century (29,175). The principality acted as a vassal of the Khazar Khaganate in political events in the North Caucasus. Starting from the late 9th century, the rulers of Derbent, continuing the Arab Caliphate's policy of expansion in the North Caucasus, conducted raids on Shandan (a name some modern historians read as Cidan) and Sarir (55, 99). These raids provoked resistance and counterattacks from the Khazars, who considered the North Caucasus within their sphere of influence. According to "Tarikh al-Bab," the rulers of Derbent conducted raids on Sarir in 876 and 878 and on Shandan in 886. In response to these raids, the Khazar state launched a counter-campaign against Derbent in 901. The same source indicates that during the Khazar army's campaign, the ruler of Samandar's forces participated alongside

the Khazars (44,51). In 905, during another campaign by the Derbent forces against Shandan, the combined forces of the Khazar, Sarir, and Samandar rulers defended Shandan. However, by 938, the forces of the Samandar ruler were no longer mentioned in the campaigns of the Derbent ruler in the North Caucasus, indicating that Samandar had exited the sphere of Khazar influence (44,56). Researchers believe that the reason for Samandar's continued subordination to the Khazars until 938 was the threat from the south—first from the Arab Caliphate and later from the rulers of Derbent. From the mid-10th century, the political events in the Caliphate and Azerbaijan began to reduce the pressure from the south. Consequently, the rulers of Samandar no longer felt the need to submit to the Khazar state.

In the mid-9th century, the Khazar khagan Joseph mentioned the Serir in his correspondence with the Spanish ambassador Hasdai ibn Shaprut. Joseph's information suggests that the Serir had their own rulers (85,80). After the collapse of the Khazar Khaganate in 965, the Serir state began to strengthen militarily. Arab authors provide conflicting descriptions of the territory inhabited by the Serir. Masudi placed the Serir country neighboring Samandar, sometimes even equating the two states. However, other Arab authors indicated that the Serir had an independent political structure. The geographical location of the Serir state was generally agreed upon in Arab sources, placing it in the plains of the North Caucasus, later known as Avaristan (59,123). Ibn Rushd traced the origin of the Serir rulers' dynasty to the time of Khosrow I Anushirvan, while Masudi and Ibn Hawqal extended their history to the time of Bahram V Gur (47,79). According to Muhammad Rafi, the ancient Serir rulers bore the title "nutsal," and the capital was located where the current Tanusi aul is situated (11,90).

Sources indicate that the Serir participated in numerous plundering raids on neighboring countries. From the late 10th century, the Serir rulers maintained alliances with the Rus princes attempting to strengthen their positions in the Northwest Caucasus, particularly the princes of Tmutarakan and Pereyaslavl. Sources mention the Serir as allies of the Rus and Alan tribes that raided Azerbaijan, especially Shirvan, in the 1030s-1060s

(36,124). For example, when the ruler of Derbent, Maymun ibn Ahmad, invited Rus troops to the city to fight against the feudal lords, they brought the Serir with them. In the campaigns of 1030, 1032, and 1032-1033 against Shirvan, the Rus moved together with the Serir forces (36,125).

One of the states that flourished after the collapse of the Khazar Khaganate was the Alan Confederation. The origin of the Alans remains a topic of debate among historians. However, it is clear that the Alans came to the North Caucasus along with the Sarmatians and subsequently participated in the ethno-political processes in the region (66,112). After being devastated by the Huns in 370, the Alans had to abandon the territories of Kuban, Terek, and the Azov area, which had previously been under their influence. Following the Huns, the Alans fell under the political influence of the Great Bulgar Khaganate and then the Khazar Khaganate (30,67). The fall of the Khazar Khaganate led to the flourishing of the Alan Confederation, which lasted until the Mongol invasion of the North Caucasus in the 1220s. By the 10th century, the Alan-As were undoubtedly Turkic (38,121). In the 10th century, Ibn Rushd described the Khazar state's borders, mentioning a vast country bordered by large mountains, with distant regions inhabited by the Tulas and Lugars extending to Tiflis (38,123). The term "Tulas" is rendered as "Taulas" in other writings, a combination of the Turkic ethnonyms "taulu" and "as," meaning "Mountainous As." Russian scholars Kuznetsov, Abayev, and Tebuev agree with this interpretation (192,125;135,161). Interestingly, until the late 16th century, the Karachay-Balkars were referred to as Alans or As in Arab sources. In 1321, the Arab geographer Abu al-Fida noted that east of the Abkhaz, along the coast, lay the city of Alania (Madinat al-Alaniya). The Alans were of Turkic origin and practiced Christianity. Another Turkic people, the As, lived nearby and shared the same origin, language, and religion as the Alans (38,123; 75,29; 76, 244).

The historian Sharaf ad-Din Ali Yazdi also referred to the Karachays as "As," locating them at the foot of Mount Elbrus. He mentioned Teymur's campaign against the As, naming their rulers Borubirdi and Burikan, who bore pure Turkic names (61.201).

Yazdi also noted that the Alans were Christians. In the early 10th century, the Alans in the North Caucasus created the Saltovo-Mayaki culture, initially influencing other agricultural and nomadic populations in the region. However, studies of this culture revealed the absence of a unified Alan state (61,97).

The Alans also closely participated in the political life of both the North and South Caucasus. In the 10th-11th centuries, the Alan rulers pursued a policy more aligned with Byzantium and Rus. From the mid-11th century, the Alans had a close alliance with Georgia, which lasted until the Mongol subjugation of Georgia in the 1220s. Georgian Queen Tamar married Alan commander David Soslan to reduce the Kipchak influence in Georgia's political life (50,12; 51,36).

Thus, the Alans were the creators of the first Christian state in the North Caucasus. According to Masudi, the Alan state was ruled by a Turkish ruler called "krndadc." Some ancient Alan city names also contain words like "tigin," "shad," and "inal." The capital of the Alan state was the city of Minqas, located around Lower Arkhyz. It is believed that the summer residence of the Alan rulers was the town of Kafar (or Kafar), which has survived to modern times (74,210;147). The Alan state declined in the late 12th century and split into separate tribes.

The late 10th century marks the decline of the Saltovo-Mayatsk culture. Many researchers who study Alan culture associate this decline with the Pechenegs. However, there are also opposing views. Some believe that the cause of the culture's collapse was the Khazar-Alan wars. Researchers like Artamonov, Pletneva, and others support this view (2,342; 85,46).

The Pechenegs, a Turkic tribe, played a significant role in the ethnic life of the North Caucasus before the arrival of the Kipchaks. The earliest mention of the Pecheneg ethnic term dates back to the 8th century in Chinese chronicles, where the Pechenegs were first listed as "Pi-szen." The Chinese chronicle also grouped the Pechenegs with the Khazars and Bulgars. These tribes were later known as "Khazar Pechenegs" (60). Information about the Pechenegs can also be found in Mahmud Kashgari's work "Divan-i Lughat al-

Turk," where the Pechenegs are described as a branch of the Oghuz tribes, referred to as "Bechenek" (13,124;14,47). In Karachay sources, this tribe is called "Bızınqılı." The origin of the name "Pecheneg" remains disputed. Some believe it derives from the name of one of their rulers, Bechen (27.31;63). Other authors suggest that the word "Pecheneg" means "our own" or "close," indicating the Pechenegs' special warrior status among the Oghuz. The name "Keng̃er" within the Pecheneg tribes also supports this view, meaning "noble" or "aristocrat" (26,872;120,89).

Scholars differ on when the Pechenegs migrated to the steppes of the North Caucasus and South Russia. Some, like Pletneva, Tebuev, and Kuznetsov, believe that the Pechenegs began migrating to the North Caucasus steppes in the second half of the 9th century. Initially, the Pechenegs settled in the Khazar Khaganate's territory but were later defeated by the Khazars and pushed to the western steppes. Some scholars also state that the Pechenegs were driven westward by the Oghuz (26,19;120,90;171,27).

The role of the Pechenegs in the ethnogenesis of the North Caucasus peoples was first raised by U. Aliyev, who suggested that part of the Karachays, known as Bızınqılı, were descendants of the Pechenegs. Archaeologically, Y. P. Alekseyeva emphasized the participation of the Pechenegs in the ancestry of the Karachay-Balkar people and linked the Oghuz components in the Karachay-Balkar language to the Pechenegs (7,110;21,71).

Both Arab and Byzantine sources mention the Pechenegs when discussing the peoples of the North Caucasus and the Volga region. Arab authors like Al-Bakri and Al-Balkhi noted that the Pechenegs were among the politically active tribes in the Caucasus in the 11th century (73,157). The anonymous author of "Hudud al-Alam" distinguished the Pechenegs settled in the North Caucasus from those north of the Black Sea, calling them "Khazar Pechenegs" (43.145). The same author also mentioned Khazar slaves captured and sold by the Pechenegs.

The collapse of the Khazar Khaganate allowed the Pechenegs to expand their influence in the North Caucasus and South Russian steppes. Interestingly, some Arab authors linked the destruction of the Khazar Khaganate to the Turks. Researchers

investigating the military campaign of Kyiv Prince Svyatoslav against the Khazars argue that such a large campaign was only possible through an alliance with the Pechenegs (2,171). This view aligns with the information provided by Arab authors. It should also be noted that the political activity of the Pechenegs prevented Svyatoslav from consolidating his power in the Lower Volga and the North Caucasus (43.112). Nevertheless, Russian expansion reached one of the main Khazar cities, Sarkel, which, as we will see, became a major source of conflict between the Russians and the Kipchaks. From the mid-11th century, the Pechenegs also participated in the Kipchak tribal confederation.

Before the Kipchak influx into the North Caucasus, one of the settled peoples in these territories was the As. The As are historically proven to be one of the ancient peoples of the Caucasus. The 9th-10th centuries saw the As among the influential peoples in the Caucasus. According to Byzantine Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, "Asia (the land of the As) lies to the west of the land of the Alans" (45,123;110,100). The same author noted that the As had their own rulers. The "Cambridge Document" mentions a ruler of the As named "Paynilan the Turk."

Researchers believe that the As created their cultures in both the North Caucasus and the Upper Don and North Donetsk regions. In 913, the As rebelled against the Khazars. The Khazar Khagan, with the help of the Alans, defeated the Don As (29.191). From this time on, the As were primarily associated with the Northwest Caucasus, specifically the western part of Alania (29, 61).

Interestingly, the Khazar ruler Joseph mentioned the "Kasogs" to the west of the Alans in his letter ("All who live in the land of Kasa"). Most researchers equate this people with the Adyghe. However, in the mid-10th century, Constantine Porphyrogenitus referred to the Kasogs (As) as a geographic region to the west of Alania (10;26,231;55,22). Researchers believe this indicates that the Adyghe were not subject to the Khazars. According to Adyghe legends, the ruler of the As was titled "Ak Yabgu." Arab sources also noted that the Khazar khagan's deputy among the As bore the title "Yabgu." One such figure mentioned in Adyghe legends was named Inal. The Adyghe considered Shanjir



Fortress to be Inal's residence. According to Adyghe legends, Inal attempted to unify the Adyghe into a single state but was opposed by feudal lords supported by the "Ovs" (10,110;163,144). Inal pursued the feudal lords into Abkhazia and made peace with the local tribes. Later studies confirmed that Inal's military campaign in Abkhazia was a historical reality. However, in the 10th century, Masudi noted that the Adyghe were politically fragmented into different tribes (81,189;176.102).

The fall of the Khazar Khaganate opened the way for the Russian druzhina to the North Caucasus and the Volga steppes. After the collapse of the Khazar Khaganate, Tmutarakan became a source of conflict between the Rus princes and the Adyghe and As. Since the Khazar Khaganate's fall, the territory of Tmutarakan fell within the As (Adyghe) sphere of influence. However, the Rus princes were not satisfied with the mere collapse of the Khazar empire. It should also be noted that the Byzantines were also interested in consolidating their presence in Tmutarakan. In 969, the Zikh archbishopric, directly subordinate to the Patriarch of Constantinople, was established there (168,43). The Byzantine efforts to consolidate their presence in Tmutarakan and the As aligning with Byzantium against the Rus did not go unnoticed by the Rus princes. Consequently, in 987, Vladimir Svyatoslavich launched a campaign against Tmutarakan. Sources indicate that the Kyiv prince also bore the title "khagan" in the sense of being the ruler of Tmutarakan (89.81).

Researchers do not attribute Prince Vladimir's success in incorporating Tmutarakan into his sphere of influence solely to the military might of Kievan Rus. They believe that Vladimir was assisted by the Jewish community in Tmutarakan, fearing the establishment of a church subordinate to Byzantium. Byzantine anti-Jewish policies at the time were well-known (110.175). However, the consolidation of Rus influence in Tmutarakan exacerbated relations between the Rus and the North Caucasian tribes, including the Alans and the As, as well as the nomadic Turks. The Rus presence in Tmutarakan facilitated Kievan Rus's expansion into the North Caucasus and the steppes (89.90). Consequently, long-term conflicts ensued between Kievan Rus and the Caucasian tribes and nomads.

Sources mention Prince Mstislav of Kyiv's campaign against Tmutarakan and the "Kasogs" (both As and Adyghe) in 1016-1017, and the "Tale of Bygone Years" refers to the military campaign of Svyatoslav Mstislavich's grandson against the Adyghe in 1022 (46,179;175,467). Adyghe folklore identifies the Adyghe commander who opposed Svyatoslav Mstislavich as Inal's son, Idar. A 17th-century Russian chronicle notes that Ivan the Terrible's father-in-law was named Temryuk Idarovich, indicating Idar was a descendant of Inal (81.123). Adyghe legend also recounts Idar's war with Tmutarakan. The legend mentions various tribes, including the Shapsugs, Kakhetians, and Shegaks, as part of Idar's army (65.125). This intense conflict over dominance in Tmutarakan, the North Caucasus, and the steppes continued until the Kipchaks consolidated their presence in 1094.

Russian expansion was not limited to the Tmutarakan principality. The Rus also exploited the internal conflicts among the Caucasian peoples. Sources provide ample information about the participation of Rus troops in the military conflicts between the rulers of Derbent and the Sarir kingdom in the late 10th century. For example, the sources mention the participation of the Sarirs in the Rus military campaign against Shirvan and Derbent in 1030 (16.163). Similar events occurred during the campaigns of 1032, 1032-1033, and 1033. In all these campaigns, Sarir warriors fought alongside the Rus. The later campaigns also involved the Alans (16,166). The long-standing conflict began to subside somewhat after the separation of the Karakh territory from Sarir. It is believed that by 995, this territory fell under the political influence of the ruler of Derbent, who converted to Islam. In 1025, a peace and alliance treaty was signed between the ruler of Sarir and the ruler of Derbent (79,102). However, the Sarir leaders continued to interfere in Derbent's internal affairs despite this alliance. For example, a chronicle mentions a conflict between the people of Sarir and the Derbent residents in 1064, noting the participation of "various Turks" under the leadership of "tarkhans" and "batriks" on the Sarir side (79,105). Sources indicate that the rulers of Sarir held the title "tarxan" (71,121). From the 13th century onwards, the rulers of Sarir carried the title "Nusal." Additionally, sources show that the

rulers of Sarir commanded a significant military force, primarily composed of Turks (71,123). The capital of the state is believed to have been Humraj.

One of the interesting states existing in the North Caucasus during the Kipchak incursions was the country referred to as Cidan in some sources and Shandan in others. The ethnic origin of the state's population remains a topic of debate among researchers. However, most historians agree that the population of Cidan predominantly consisted of Turkic-Savirs (204,33). Based on the information from sources, it is possible to determine that the country of Cidan was located in northeastern Dagestan. A source from the 7th century mentions that the ruler of Cidan, "Alp Iletver," abandoned paganism through Albania and converted to Christianity. Alban historian Musa Kalankatli also noted that Iletver cut down a sacred tree as a symbol of adopting the new faith (101,117). Arab sources from the 10th century indicate that this state continued to be politically active in northeastern Dagestan, but they do not provide information about the state's religion. In Arab sources, the country of Cidan is often mentioned in the context of military campaigns by the rulers of Derbent (101,117). After the Arab Caliphate fragmented in the late 9th century, the rulers of Derbent continued the policy of Muslim penetration in the North Caucasus, leading to armed conflicts with the Khazar state until its collapse in an attempt to gain control over Cidan (29,69). However, there were also friendly relations between the rulers of Cidan and Derbent. Arab historian Masudi noted that the Emir of Derbent sought assistance from the Emir of Cidan, "Salifan," to fight against local feudal lords (31,70).

Arab sources name several rulers of Cidan, such as Iliger, Bulakh, Bolmakh, and Kutilsiz (31,71; 71,199). Archaeological excavations confirm the information provided by Arab authors. These excavations have revealed that the Savirs-Cidans had an urban culture. For example, the remains of the ancient city of Suvar, believed to be located in the area called Urseki and referred to as Varachan by Musa Kalankatli, have been discovered (101.121). Several Savir fortresses have also been found and archaeologically studied in the Buynak district, in places called Agachkala (14.51). Besides the cities,

several kurgans attributed to the Savirs have been uncovered. These kurgans contained weapons, ornaments, and clothing associated with nomadic culture. The internal structure of the kurgans, resembling living quarters, indicates that the Cidans had not forgotten their nomadic-Hun origins (14,51; 79,335).

The collapse of the Khazar Khaganate led to the emergence of various small states in the North Caucasus, which came under the political influence of both the Rus and Byzantium. Russian expansion had already captured the Tmutarakan principality and opened the way to the North Caucasus. The formation of the Kipchak confederation in the North Caucasus halted the expansion of the Russian princes, responding to their incursions and stopping the expansion, despite losing the Dnieper lands.

#### *The Migration of the Kipchaks to the North Caucasus and Their Political Structure*

The migration of the Kipchaks to the North Caucasus and their political activities in these territories is a complex subject to study. The reasons for this complexity are as follows:

1. Scarcity of Written Sources: There is a dearth of written sources detailing the Kipchaks' political activities in the North Caucasus. Although some sources provide information about the political relations of the Kipchaks, who settled in the Kuban, Don, and the plains of the Northwestern Caucasus, with the Rus princes, there is almost no information about their activities in the southern regions of the North Caucasus. The available data primarily come from archaeological sources and ethnographic-linguistic studies. Arab authors who wrote about the Kipchaks were mainly interested in their activities in the South Caucasus. Some information can be gleaned from Georgian sources. However, the information about the Kipchaks' political activities in the North Caucasus is episodic, and their political relations with local tribes are generally not documented. Only during the Mongol invasions do we find certain relevant details.

2. Lack of Interest from North Caucasian Historians: North Caucasian historians have only recently shown interest in this topic. Interestingly and somewhat paradoxically, historians from Karachay, Balkar, and Kumyk, despite their languages belonging to the

Kipchak group, consider their origins to be Hun, Bulgar, or Alan-As. Accepting these views raises a peculiar question: for a people's language to be influenced by another language or language group requires a significant amount of time. Even without extensive intermingling, it is hard to explain how the languages of these three peoples developed in the direction of the Kipchak language group. This contradiction seems to attract little attention.

From the above, it becomes clear that to shed light on the activities of the Kipchaks in the North Caucasus, it is essential to approach the sources comprehensively, utilizing written sources, archaeological findings, and ethnographic materials.

With the collapse of the Khazar Khaganate, the barrier that had long prevented nomadic invasions via the Caspian Sea route also fell. In the absence of the Khazars, the Oghuz moved along the Volga River and spread across the plains of southeastern Europe. Archaeological excavations reveal traces of these nomadic invasions in these areas. Although the remains of Itil and Samandar have not yet been discovered, excavations at other strongholds in the Lower Don, North Donetsk, and especially Sarkel, provide a vivid picture of the destruction. Archaeologists found poorly constructed huts, likely used as shelters by refugees, amid the ruins of Slavic Belaya Vezha built on the site of Sarkel (101,117). Interestingly, no nomadic pottery was found in the upper layers of the Sarkel settlement. Both agriculture and crafts were destroyed. The fields of the Alan-Bulgar farmers were overgrown with weeds. Some residents hid in the wooded hills of the Don, Terek, and Kuban, while others fled to the mountainous plateau of the Caucasus (110,98). As in the post-Hun period, the plains again suffered from ruthless nomadic raids, which were spoken of with horror even in distant France.

The rich pastures of the Lower Volga region, the North Caucasus, and the western Caspian coast attracted nomadic Turks, providing excellent conditions for nomadic herding due to the humid climate and abundance of pastures (111,31).

The retreat of the agricultural population from the plains is also observed in the North Caucasus. According to T. M. Minayeva, life ceased in the Alan settlements of Stavropol,

near the Kuban, Uchkurk, Elburkan, and Yeni-Kuvin villages around the 11th century (78,169). During this period, from the 10th to the 12th centuries, the population increased in the depths of the mountainous plateau and at the entrances to the mountain passes. Minayeva specifically notes that the newly revived population settled in inaccessible areas unsuitable for habitation, indicating this choice was not voluntary but forced (78,169). Minayeva believes that the Kipchaks pressured the Alans in the North Caucasus. Without denying this view, one could conclude that the displacement of the sedentary population began during the Pecheneg-Oghuz period before the Kipchaks. According to Georgian historian Cuan Sheri from the 11th century, during his time, the Pecheneg country was confined to a river within Ossetia; later, the Pechenegs fled from the Turks and moved west (59,18). The presence of Oghuz in Central Caucasus is evidenced by the discovery of a stone statue near Bolshoy Zelenchuk and Karavul station. The statue's face and the positioning of the hands—right hand bent towards the elbow and left hand on the sword's hilt—resemble early Turkish stone statues (85,119).

After the collapse of the Khazar state, life also ceased in the territory of northeastern Dagestan. The population living on the hills of the Terek-Sulak plain, including around Germenchik, was exterminated or migrated. These monuments are dated precisely to the 9th-10th centuries, with many showing signs of fire in subsequent periods (86,55).

Around this time, life ceased in the settlements along the middle Sulak River. The early medieval settlement of Miatlin, located at the junction of the Sulak cliffs, is of particular importance for our topic. Miatlin is the southernmost monument of steppe culture. Further south, the monuments of local foothill cultures of Dagestan were located, with the closest being the mausoleums around Uzun-Tepe. It is believed that between Miatli and Uzuntala lay the southern boundary of North Dagestan's culture, which was also the ancient border of the Khazar state. The cessation of life at Miatlin in the 9th-10th centuries and the subsequent discovery of nomadic graves indicate that nomads penetrated the Sulak valley after the Khazars (92,89). However, the movement of nomads deeper into the country stopped at this point. They occupied the Shura-Ozen River basin after crossing

the Tepsili-Tau plateau. This can be determined by comparing the history of Miatlin with the history of early medieval monuments in the northeastern mountainous plateau (92,90).

It is known that the Oghuz participated in the attack on the Khazar Khaganate at the invitation of Kyiv Prince Svyatoslav Igorevich. Ibn Miskawayh writes that the Turks (Oghuz) attacked the Khazar state in 965. After the Kyiv troops withdrew from North Dagestan, some Oghuz advanced towards the plains of the Terek-Sulak plain (100.46).

The penetration of nomads into the Dagestan plateau turned these areas into a major Turkic-speaking zone formed during the Khazar period, including almost all of northeastern Dagestan. The ethnic consolidation of this zone in the mid-11th century was associated with a new wave of nomadic migration to Eastern Europe. These were the Kipchaks (172,132).

After being defeated by the It-Barak tribe, Oghuz Khan remained on an island formed by two rivers and settled there. At that time, a pregnant woman whose husband had died in the war gave birth to her child in the hollow of a large tree. Oghuz Khan took pity on the woman and said that since the child had no father, he would adopt him. He named the boy Kipchak, a Turkish word meaning "rotten tree" (129,179;182,57). All Kipchaks are said to descend from this child. This is a legend about the origin of the Kipchaks.

Researchers differ on when the Kipchaks appeared in the North Caucasian steppes. Some believe their appearance dates to the mid-11th century. However, other researchers dispute this, suggesting that by the mid-11th century, the Kipchaks had already become the dominant force in the North Caucasus, a process that must have taken some time. These researchers date the Kipchaks' appearance in these regions to the early 11th century.

Further disagreements among researchers concern the political unity of the Kipchaks. This includes the problem of whether the Kipchaks, Cumans, and Polovtsians were the same people, as different sources describe them with varying appearances. Nevertheless, these differently described peoples demonstrated the same political stance towards Byzantium, the Rus state, and the North Caucasian peoples. Some Arab, Persian, and

Russian sources equate these groups, raising another issue: which of these peoples participated in the political life of the North Caucasus.

*Kipchaks' Migration to the North Caucasus and Their Political Role*

One of the ongoing debates, and one of the almost unresolved questions, is the role of the Kipchaks in the political life of the North Caucasus. Some authors completely deny the Kipchaks' role in the political life of the North Caucasus, while others support the view that the Kipchaks were very active in this region. It would be appropriate to examine these issues individually.

Russian researchers V.P. Alekseyev and Y.P. Alekseyeva date the Kipchaks' appearance in the North Caucasus to the mid-11th century. Their primary argument is based on information from Russian and Georgian sources about the Kipchaks (7.76;22.81). According to Russian sources, the first mentions of the Kipchaks date back to 1055. These researchers rely on Russian sources because the Kipchaks first began to trouble Rus lands before affecting the North Caucasus (7,77;22,83). To support their argument, they cite Georgian sources, noting that the first records of the Kipchaks in Georgian sources appear in the 1060s. If the Kipchaks had played a major role in the North Caucasus, the Georgians would have documented it (21.30). Both scholars place the Kipchaks' penetration into the interior of the Caucasus in the late 11th century, associating this period with conflicts between the Kipchaks and the Alans.

The same view is confirmed in the book "History of the Peoples of the North Caucasus," edited by Narochnitsky. The book states: "By the mid-11th century, the Kipchaks appeared in the Fore-Caucasus, and by the second half of the 11th century, they were known to Georgian chroniclers. By the late 11th century, having displaced the Pechenegs, they began to play a significant role in the political life of the North Caucasus" (79,117). Historians such as T.V. Polovinkina, Y.A. Yevstiqneyev, A. Akhinzhanov, and S.G. Klyashtorny share the same opinion. However, unlike the others, Yevstiqneyev allows room for other hypotheses. He believes that due to the lack of precise materials, the beginning of the Kipchaks' appearance in the southern Russian and North Caucasian



steppes should be equated with the period of their political activity in these areas (39,67). The written sources that mention the Kipchaks in the North Caucasus and the Russian steppes unequivocally date to the mid-11th century.

Historian T.V. Polovinkina views the Kipchaks' migration to the North Caucasus as a political event, dating their arrival to the mid-11th century. She links the fall of the Tmutarakan principality directly to the Kipchaks (87.81).

Q.S. Fyodorov and G.N. Hajiakhmedova also believe that the Kipchaks' appearance in the North Caucasus did not occur before the 1060s, and their settlement in North Dagestan dates to the late 11th century (100.101;204,37). They base their conclusions mainly on the information provided by written sources.

However, combining all these arguments raises some questions. First, as the authors themselves stated, the Kipchaks' arrival in the mentioned territories was forced. It follows that the Kipchaks immediately engaged in political events and even displaced other tribes upon their arrival in the southern Russian and North Caucasian steppes. Yet, the migration, settlement, and consolidation of the Kipchaks in these areas, including gathering their tribes and restoring their forces, would have taken some time. Second, from the written sources, archaeological findings, and the writings of the cited authors, it is evident that the Kipchaks migrated to the North Caucasian steppes in large family groups. This leads to the conclusion that the Kipchaks began fighting as soon as they migrated. While considering that these authors' views are based on the interpretation of written sources, it is also necessary to note that they left these issues unanswered.

The second group of authors argues that the Kipchaks arrived in the North Caucasian steppes earlier. One of the first among them, A.V. Gadlo, notes that Russian and Georgian sources took political events into account and writes that if Russian sources date the Kipchaks' raids on Russian lands to 1055 and 1061, then the appearance of the Kipchaks in the North Caucasian and southern Russian steppes should be dated earlier. Although Gadlo does not specify the exact chronological framework for the Kipchaks' arrival, he considers the mid-11th century the latest possible period (29,140).

The same view is confirmed by the authors of "Early Turks in the Caucasus," the Fyodorovs, who, based on materials obtained from archaeological excavations in the North Caucasus, date the Kipchaks' arrival to the first quarter of the 11th century (100,147).

Historian S. Pletnyova, who studied Kipchak statues found around Azov and the Don, also dates the Kipchaks' migration to the southern Russian and indirectly to the North Caucasian steppes to the early 11th century (170,52). Pletnyova attempts to clarify the problem of how the Kipchaks quickly formed a powerful tribal alliance. She believes that the Kipchaks did not completely annihilate or displace the Oghuz, Pecheneg, and Alan populations already present in these areas. Instead, the formation of the Kipchak tribal alliance occurred with the close participation of these tribes (170,57).

#### *Kipchaks' Migration to the North Caucasus and Their Political Structure*

Archaeologist H.H. Bichiyev, through his research, posits that the first Kipchak groups might have appeared in the North Caucasus as early as the 9th-10th centuries (25,127). This view is also shared by Karachay scholar Tebuyev (191,89). Both scholars differentiate between the Cumans and Kipchaks when discussing their migration to the North Caucasus. They suggest that the groups that migrated in the 9th-10th centuries were likely Cumans, with Kipchaks later merging with them (25,130; 191,90).

Georgian scholar Z.V. Anchabadze corroborates these findings to some extent. Based on Georgian chronicles, Anchabadze concludes that the Kipchaks were already residing in the North Caucasus by the mid-11th century (72,101). He suggests that Kipchaks' presence in the region dates back to earlier periods than previously assumed. Russian archaeologist Minayeva also dates the arrival of Kipchaks in the North Caucasus to no later than the 1040s, noting that "migration" rather than "invasion" is the more accurate term (77,172).

#### *Racial and Ethnic Identity*

The racial identity of the Kipchaks who migrated to the North Caucasus is a contentious issue, dividing researchers into three groups:

1. Mongoloid Origin: Researchers like G.S. Fyodorov and K.N. Hajiakhmedova argue that the Kipchaks were of Mongoloid origin. They note the significant Kipchak influence on the Kumyks and Karachays, yet maintain these groups are of Caucasian race, asserting their ancient presence in the region predates the Kipchaks (101,57). This raises questions about how deeply rooted traditions and languages of these ancient peoples could closely align with those of the Kipchaks.

2. Europid Origin: Scholars such as Minayeva, Alekseyeva, Kuznetsov, and Gadlo suggest that the Kipchaks were of Europid origin. While acknowledging the presence of Mongoloid elements among the Kipchak tribes, they assert these elements were not dominant. They link the ethnogenesis of the Kumyks and Karachays to the Kipchaks (53,160; 136,173).

3. Mixed Origin: Some historians, including Y. Yevstiqneyev, argue that the Kipchaks, Cumans, and Polovtsy were different names for the same people, though they recognize the mixed racial elements within these groups. They suggest that Kipchaks, identified as "Polovtsy" by the Rus due to their "yellow" complexion, were politically unified but ethnically diverse (39,12).

### ***Political Structure***

The political structure of the Kipchaks in the North Caucasus is also a matter of debate. There are two main perspectives:

1. Confederation of Semi-Autonomous Tribes: According to various historical sources, the Kipchaks operated as a loose confederation of semi-autonomous tribes. For instance, Petachyah of Regensburg noted that the Kipchaks were governed by different princes and noble families rather than a single ruler .

2. Unified Central Leadership: Other historians argue that despite appearing fragmented, the Kipchaks had a form of central leadership. Georgian historian Anchabadze, for example, asserts that the Kipchak tribes in the North Caucasus had some form of central governance, albeit loosely structured (28,116).

Archaeological findings, such as Kipchak statues and burial sites, indicate a significant Kipchak presence in the region by the early 11th century (170,52). The Kipchaks' political influence, as evidenced by their interactions with neighboring states and internal tribal dynamics, suggests a complex socio-political structure that allowed for both centralized and decentralized governance depending on the context and necessity.

### ***Historical and Archaeological Evidence***

The arrival and establishment of Kipchaks in the North Caucasus brought significant changes, as reflected in both historical texts and archaeological records. Their migration disrupted existing political entities and influenced local cultures, leading to a blend of Kipchak and indigenous traditions. Researchers continue to explore the full extent of the Kipchaks' impact on the region, piecing together evidence from various sources to better understand their role in shaping the historical landscape of the North Caucasus.

Research on the Kipchaks' migration and spread in the North Caucasus reveals differing opinions among historians. Initially, the role of Kipchaks in the Caucasus was underemphasized. For example, K.V. Kudryashov's "Qipchaq Steppe" briefly mentions the Kipchaks' political significance in the Caucasus, focusing mainly on the Lower Don, Northern Donets River basins, and the southwestern shores of the Volga River (132,51-61). Professor Miller similarly emphasizes Russian-Kipchak relations, with minimal discussion of their settlements (77,114).

Ismail Miziyev posits that the Kipchaks' spread was limited to the western part of the Fore-Caucasus. He denies the primary role of Kipchaks in the ethnogenesis of the Karachay-Balkar people, favoring the Alan-Hun substratum theory (76,2.301). Miziyev challenges sources that claim Kipchaks fled to the Karachay mountains after the Mongol invasion, suggesting instead that they fled to the Crimean mountains (76, 302).

However, Miziyev's arguments are debatable. Archaeological evidence shows a strong Kipchak presence in the Karachay region, making it a more plausible refuge than the distant Crimea. The similarities between Karachay and Kipchak burial practices further support this.

### *Expansion and Settlement Patterns*

Y.V. Pilipchuk questions written sources indicating Kipchak settlements in the Taman Peninsula, Kuban region, and along the Sunja River. He argues that these areas were actually inhabited by local populations under Kipchak political influence (170,73-74). Conversely, P.V. Golubovski acknowledges the Kipchaks' significant presence in the Western Fore-Caucasus, particularly around present-day Krasnodar, while not ruling out their broader settlement (82,99-103).

A.A. Yessen's research, based on archaeological findings, suggests the Kipchak confederation's southern borders extended through Armavir, Pyatigorsk, and Kalmyk steppes (165.24). X.O. Laypanov also notes the Kipchaks' role in shaping the history of North Caucasian peoples but downplays their ethnological influence (69.22).

From the late 1950s onward, studies on the Kipchaks' presence in the North Caucasus became more comprehensive. Researchers re-evaluated written sources, supplemented by archaeological and ethnographic data, to show the Kipchaks' extensive spread from the Derbent region to various parts of the North Caucasus. However, some works still underplay their role, such as "The History of Kabardino-Balkar ASSR" and "The History of Dagestan," which offer limited coverage of the Kipchaks (110,75; 146,104).

### *Modern Perspectives and Archaeological Insights*

Modern research provides a broader understanding of the Kipchaks' territories. Magomedov indicates that by the 12th century, Kipchak influence extended to Derbent (146,104). A.V. Gadlo highlights their presence in the Fore-Caucasus, Northern Dagestan, and Kuban regions, while noting the lack of Kipchak archaeological sites around Derbent (7,143).

Peter Golden acknowledges the Kipchaks' extensive settlement, describing their areas from Kabarda to Karachay-Cherkessia, Pyatigorsk, Kuban, and Kum-Machin territories (110,49). T.X. Kumykov supports this view, placing the Kipchaks as a primary ethnic element in the North Caucasus by the 13th century (46,24).

Georgian historian Ançabadze aligns with this perspective, noting their settlement from North Caucasus to Derbent, though without specifying exact borders (29,116). H. Tebuyev also concurs, emphasizing their wide territorial spread (192,62).

Y.P. Alekseyeva confines Kipchak settlements to the Taman Peninsula and the Fore-Caucasus, suggesting their presence in other regions was more political than residential (22,29). Alekseyeva's conclusions are based on extensive archaeological research in Karachay-Cherkessia and Stavropol (23,151).

#### *Ethno-Political Impact and Conclusion*

Researchers such as Y.A. and G.S. Fyodorov highlight the Kipchaks' extensive settlements from the Taman Peninsula to Derbent by the late 11th and early 12th centuries (100,121). "The History of the Peoples of the North Caucasus" corroborates this view, detailing the Kipchaks' settlement in the Fore-Caucasus, coastal Dagestan, Chechen-Ingushetia, and around Derbent (45,101).

Adyghe historian Samir Xotko suggests that while the Kipchaks did not settle everywhere, their political influence extended across the region, affecting the local elite's composition (103,99;226). T.M. Minayeva refines the understanding of Kipchak territories based on archaeological evidence, proposing a broader southern boundary for their settlements (78,191).

In conclusion, the Kipchaks played a significant role in the North Caucasus, both in terms of settlement and political influence. Their impact on the region's ethnogenesis, particularly among the Karachay, Balkars, Nogais, Circassians, and Kumyks, is evident through linguistic, archaeological, and ethnographic studies. Complex analyses combining these sources provide a comprehensive understanding of the Kipchaks' historical and cultural contributions to the North Caucasus.

Continuing from the previous analysis, the examination of the Kipchaks' ethno-political influence in the North Caucasus must delve into their impact on specific ethnic groups and the broader sociopolitical landscape of the region.

Linguistic studies play a crucial role in understanding the Kipchaks' impact on North Caucasian peoples. The comparison of Kipchak and local languages reveals significant influences, especially in vocabulary and phonetics. For instance, the Karachay-Balkar language, belonging to the Kipchak group of Turkic languages, exhibits numerous Kipchak elements, indicating prolonged contact and integration

#### *Archaeological Findings*

Archaeological excavations in the North Caucasus provide material evidence of Kipchak presence and their interactions with local populations. The discovery of Kipchak burial sites, characterized by specific funeral practices and grave goods, aligns with descriptions found in historical records. These findings, particularly in regions like Karachay-Cherkessia, Stavropol, and Kabardino-Balkaria, support the hypothesis of Kipchak settlement and influence (157,169; 23,151).

#### *Ethnographic Parallels*

Ethnographic parallels between the Kipchaks and North Caucasian peoples further illustrate the extent of cultural exchange and assimilation. Traditional clothing, weaponry, and social customs among the Karachay, Balkars, and Kumyks exhibit similarities to Kipchak practices, suggesting a significant cultural impact (104,65; 191,62).

The Kipchaks' political influence extended through their integration into existing polities and the establishment of their own power structures. They often served as military allies or mercenaries for local rulers, as evidenced by their participation in various regional conflicts. For example, Kipchak warriors were integral to the armies of Georgian kings and other local powers, playing crucial roles in military campaigns and territorial defense (8,116; 162,155).

#### *Formation of Kipchak Confederation*

The formation of a Kipchak confederation in the North Caucasus reflects their ability to organize and exert political control over a vast territory. This confederation, comprising multiple semi-independent tribes, facilitated coordinated military actions and political

strategies. The presence of central leadership figures, such as Khan Atrak, indicates a degree of centralized authority within this confederation (7,119; 28,134).

Historians and anthropologists debate the racial composition of the Kipchaks, with some arguing for a predominantly Mongoloid origin while others suggest a primarily Europoid background. This debate extends to their descendants in the North Caucasus, where physical anthropological studies reveal a mixture of traits. The evidence suggests that the Kipchaks, through prolonged interaction with local populations, developed a diverse genetic and cultural heritage (103,57; 119,160). The Kipchaks' presence and activities in the North Caucasus left a lasting impact on the region's sociopolitical dynamics. Their influence is evident in the administrative and military structures of later polities, as well as in the cultural and linguistic heritage of the region's peoples. The integration of Kipchak elements into the fabric of North Caucasian societies contributed to the formation of complex, multi-ethnic communities that have persisted into modern times (139,2; 70,140).

Even after the decline of Kipchak political dominance, their cultural traditions continued to influence the region. The survival of Kipchak customs, language elements, and social practices among North Caucasian groups highlights the enduring nature of their legacy. This cultural continuity underscores the deep integration of the Kipchaks into the historical and ethnographic landscape of the North Caucasus (127,23; 137,25).

The Kipchaks' migration to the North Caucasus and their subsequent integration into the region's ethnic and political landscape represent a significant chapter in the history of the Caucasus. Through a combination of linguistic, archaeological, and ethnographic evidence, researchers have pieced together a comprehensive picture of the Kipchaks' influence. Their role in the ethnogenesis of various North Caucasian peoples, their political and military activities, and their lasting cultural legacy underscore the importance of the Kipchaks in shaping the history and identity of the North Caucasus.



By continuing to explore the multifaceted impact of the Kipchaks, historians and anthropologists can gain a deeper understanding of the complex interactions that have defined the region's development over the centuries. As seen, there is no trace of the Kipchak-Kuman Turkish language in the days mentioned in the "Codex Cumanicus" (37,214). Considering that the "Codex Cumanicus" was compiled long after the Kipchaks settled in the Caucasus and in a completely different location, Babayev's comparison is not accurate. The same should be said about the month names given in the same book. One of Babayev's arguments against the Kipchak ethnic basis of the Karachays and Balkars is the distinction made by modern scholars between the Kumans and the Kipchak-Polovtsians (37,215). However, this idea does not withstand criticism. If we accept that the Kumans were a separate ethnic group from the Kipchaks, the issue of the Kipchaks' influence on the formation of the Karachay and Balkar peoples remains unresolved. Almost all Turkologists and Caucasologists agree that from the end of the 11th century, the Kipchaks were the dominant political power throughout the North Caucasus up to Derbent. The Kipchak language was even the state language of the Golden Horde. It is inconceivable that such a significant force would not have influenced the formation of Turkic ethnic groups like the Karachays and Balkars. The research of I. Miziyev has been discussed above. However, unlike Miziyev, Babayev believes that the Kipchaks played a certain role in the ethnic origins of the Karachays and Balkars but opposes the idea that this role was predominant for these ethnic groups.

The first idea about the role of the Kipchaks in the origins of the Karachays and Balkars was proposed by the Russian scholar A. Samoylovich. A. Samoylovich noted that the Karachays and Balkars are ancient peoples in the Caucasus and connected one of the significant stages of their ethnogenesis with the Kipchaks. Based on the "Codex Cumanicus," Samoylovich stated that 70-80% of the Kipchak words in the codex match the words in the Karachay language (164,23). As seen, there is no trace of the Kipchak-Kuman Turkish language in the days mentioned in the "Codex Cumanicus" (37,214). Considering that the "Codex Cumanicus" was compiled long after the Kipchaks settled in

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A.N. Dyachkov-Tarasov, although claiming that the Karachays and Balkars belong to the Caucasian language group, also indicated the presence of a significant number of Kipchak elements in the Karachay language (165,56). The idea that the Karachay-Balkar language is closely related to Kipchak was also proposed by the Russian philologist and researcher N.A. Baskakov, who classified the Karachay-Balkar language linguistically within the Kipchak-Oghuz group (49,67). Baskakov also included the Kumyks in this language group. The examination of the ethnic connections between the Karachays and

Kipchaks based on linguistic materials was also conducted by M. Khabichev. He divides the Karachay language into the Malkar, Baksan-Chegem, and Kholam-Bizingi dialects. The Malkar dialect is the closest to the Kipchak language. In the Malkar dialect, the K, Q, X, Y-O, and Y-U substitutions are very common, similar to the Kipchak language. However, Khabichev also notes that there were dialectical differences among the Kipchaks. The scholar selected words corresponding to the k-dialect in the "Lay of Igor's Campaign": Yaruk-yarġan (precipice); Yaponchi-yapynchy (shoulder cover); Kayale-kaya (rock); Konchak; Tmutarakan; Topchak (a type of horse). Khabichev shows that these words belong to both the j and k dialects. Words belonging to the x-dialect include xaraluq, xara (black), and xan (king). These, according to Khabichev, are also used in the Karachay language. However, the Karachay language also contains words from other Turkic languages. Therefore, the researcher approaches the idea that the Karachays are of Kipchak origin with some caution.

At the same time, M. Khabichev concludes that the Kipchaks were not a homogeneous ethnic mass by providing examples of words belonging to both the o-dialect and the a-dialect in the Kipchak language. Additionally, Khabichev touches upon the Kipchak words in the "Codex Cumanicus" and notes that this text contains several Kipchak dialects, including words belonging to both the y and c dialects (206,10). Some linguists and historians also believe that the Karachay language has more features characteristic of the c-dialect.

Furthermore, there are books that cover various dialects of the Kipchak language, such as Asir ad-Din al-Andalusi's "Kitab al-Idrak al-Lisan al-Atrak," Asir ad-Din Abu Hayyan's "Kitab al-Tuhfat al-Zakiyya fil-Lughat al-Turkiyya," Seyfi Sarayi's "Gulistan-i fit-turki," and Jamal ad-Din Abu Muhammad Abdullah al-Turk's "Kitab al-Bulghat al-Mustaq fil-Lughat al-Turki al-Mustaq."

Interestingly, Asir ad-Din al-Andalusi's book is in the Oghuz-Kipchak dialect. However, apart from a few toponyms (Beshtau and As) and a few words (*aqac* - written as *yaqac*, *aman* - written as *yaman*, *axshi* - written as *yaxshi*, *iqi* - written as *yiqi*), there

are not many words related to Karachay. Notably, this book focuses more on the languages of the Southern Caucasus Turks. However, Abu Hayyan's book contains a significant number of Kipchak-Karachay parallel words. Abu Hayyan's book was written in Egypt. Finally, another problem arises: which dialect of the Kipchaks do the Kipchak parallels in the Karachay language belong to .

Historians such as H.H. Bichiev, R. Tebuev, and L.I. Lavrov believe that the Karachays were first ethnically connected with the Kumans, a Kipchak tribe. Among them, H.H. Bichiev and R. Tebuev even date the migration of the Kumans to the Caucasus to the early 10th century (60,210; 192,62). L.I. Lavrov and R. Tebuev also draw attention to the toponymic materials that echo the Kuman ethnonym found in the Karachay-Balkar territories and many regions of the North Caucasus: Kuma (Qum), Qum Bashi (141,32;192.63), Kumaniya (according to L.I. Lavrov, this term dates to the Huns in the North Caucasus (141,34)), and Khumarin (207.11).

The issue of linguistic parallels between the Balkar language and Kipchak is similar. "The History of the Kabardino-Balkarian ASSR (from ancient times to the present day)" states: "One of the important documents of the ancient Kipchak language is the 'Codex Cumanicus,' compiled in the 14th century. When studying the document, it was found that the Kuman language fully belongs to the Turkic language spoken by the Kipchaks. The words in the Kipchak language completely correspond to the Balkar ts dialect" (110,75). O. Laypanov also supports the idea that the Kipchaks played a significant role in the ethnic development of the Karachays. Like the authors mentioned above, he first refers to Kipchak-Karachay linguistic parallels. Laypanov focuses on burial ceremonies and terms related to religions of the Karachays and Kipchaks.

In addition, O. Laypanov links the famous Karachay noble surname Atabiyev with the Etebiç mentioned in Russian sources about the North Caucasian Kipchaks (141,18-19). According to the author, these words are found only in the Karachay language. Based on the above arguments, O. Laypanov notes that the Kipchaks played a significant role in the ethnic formation of the Karachays.

T. X. Kумыков agrees with O. Laypanov and the authors mentioned above, stating that the Kipchaks played an important role in the ethnogenesis of the Karachay-Balkars (113,128; 165,32). L. I. Lavrov not only attributes the origins of the Karachay-Balkars to the Kipchaks but also explains the numerous Ossetian elements in Karachay-Balkar customs as a result of the intermingling of the Kipchaks and Alans upon their arrival in the Caucasus. Lavrov does not consider it correct to limit the appearance of the Kipchaks in the North Caucasus to the second half of the 11th century. In his opinion, the earliest appearance of the Kipchak-Kumans in the North Caucasus dates to the 2nd century. He associates this with the existence of the "Kumaniya" toponym in the North Caucasus in the 2nd century, the mention of the "Kumik kingdom" in Northern Dagestan by Arab authors in the 9th-10th centuries, and the mention of the "kumak people" in Northern Dagestan by Armenian authors in the 10th century, as well as the presence of the "kamak" people in the Caucasus in the 2nd century. According to Lavrov, the terms mentioned above are various forms of the Kuman name (115).

There are many such similarities in the "Codex Cumanicus". Therefore, it is reasonable to consider that the Kipchak language belongs to the same group as the Karachay-Balkar languages. However, it should also be acknowledged that it is not entirely correct to attribute the formation process of the Karachay-Balkars solely to the Kipchaks. It is no coincidence that the Karachay-Balkar language is classified within the Kipchak-Oghuz language group, indicating that the formation of the Karachay-Balkar language began long before the arrival of the Kipchaks.

Archaeological evidence also confirms the significant role of the Kipchaks in the ethnic origins of the Karachay-Balkar people. Historically, Kipchak archaeological monuments in the North Caucasus are divided into two periods: the monuments from the 11th to the early 13th centuries, which include Kipchak kurgans and stone statues, and the monuments from the 13th to the 15th centuries. These later monuments differ from others in their diversity and multifaceted nature. As some Kipchak tribes adopted a sedentary lifestyle, intermingled with local populations, and formed various peoples, significant

changes occurred in their customs and traditions. Naturally, all these changes were also reflected in Kipchak archaeology.

Research on Kipchak archaeology in the North Caucasus has been conducted by T. M. Minayeva, V. P. Alekseyev, Y. P. Alekseyeva, H. H. Bichiev, C. A. Pletnyova, and R. Tebuev. Almost all researchers indicate that Kipchak burial monuments are spread across the entire territory of present-day Karachay-Cherkessia. Kipchak monuments from the 11th-12th centuries can be divided mainly into two categories: burial monuments (kurgans) and Kipchak statues. As previously mentioned, Kipchak monuments are widely spread in the Karachay area. These include locations such as Kuma, the middle reaches of the Kuban River, the vicinity of Makitra village near Anapa, the right banks of the middle reaches of the Kuban River, the surrounding areas of Pyatigorsk, and in Karachay-Cherkessia itself, the Tallik area near Cherkessk, the banks of the Bolshoy Zelenchuk River, and the vicinity of the Storojevoy, Pregradnaya, Bezhgon, and Ispravny stations (see map 3) (21,34).

Kipchak kurgans differ significantly from the kurgans of other Turkic peoples. One distinguishing feature is that the kurgans are covered with small stones rather than soil. Another characteristic is that kurgans are more common in foothill areas. Additionally, many kurgans from the 11th-12th centuries contain complete horse skeletons (172,151). Another feature is that, especially in early kurgans, the deceased are buried facing west, with their faces turned to the east. In later periods, Kipchaks began to bury their dead in wooden coffins, sometimes placing other animals like oxen or mules instead of horses in the graves, and some kurgans began to be constructed with interior vaults, leading to the emergence of sub-kurgan graves (172,152; 21,36). These features, which appeared after the 13th century, are associated with the rule of the Golden Horde and the changes in customs and lifestyles resulting from the intermingling of the Kipchaks with the local population.

From the first quarter of the 13th century, the acceleration of social stratification among the Kipchaks gradually led to the differentiation of rich graves. During the Golden Horde period, some Kipchaks began to live in cities, and some adopted a sedentary lifestyle, which was also reflected in the construction of burial monuments. For example, the European traveler Rubruk wrote: "The Kipchaks build mounds over the dead and place statues on top. The faces of the statues always face east. Wealthy Kipchaks build small houses like pyramids over their graves" (215,13).

Another feature of Kipchak kurgans found in the North Caucasus, including the territory of Karachay-Cherkessia, is the presence of separate female graves and the scarcity of ceramic products in early graves. Early Kipchak graves also do not contain wooden coffins for placing the deceased (158,171). Moreover, the Kipchaks also buried deceased Christians in kurgans according to shamanic customs. Initially, the ethnic affiliation of these kurgans was unclear, but Pletnyova was the first to suggest that these kurgans belonged to the Kipchaks (171,56). An indirect reason confirming the Kipchak affiliation of the kurgans is that Kipchak kurgans appeared in places previously inhabited by Alans and other tribes from the 10th-11th centuries. This indicates that the kurgans emerged after the local population left the area (158,173). Furthermore, archaeologists studying the Kipchak kurgans in the Kuban region note that the kurgans date no later than the 13th century. Kipchak kurgans from the same period have not been found alongside Kabardin-Circassian kurgans in the same area, which date to the 14th-16th centuries. Additionally, written sources indicate that Kipchaks did not live in the Kuban region or the western part of the Karachay lands during this period. Therefore, considering the factors mentioned above, it is necessary to date the earliest Kipchak kurgans in the Kuban and Karachay-Balkar regions to the mid-11th century (181,32). Researchers have also studied the cemetery complex called Kart Curt in the Karachay region, dating from the 14th to the 18th centuries. The complex contains about 100 graves, most of which are oval and rectangular in shape, covered with stones. The heads of the buried are turned west, and their faces south. Daggers were found in the men's graves, and small jewelry in the

women's graves. Some kurgans contain wooden coffins, but no horse remains were found. All the kurgans are pagan burials. These characteristics indicate that the Karachay-Balkar burial monuments are almost identical to the Kipchak burial monuments, with the difference being the absence of horse bones, which can be explained by the transition of the Karachay-Balkars to a sedentary lifestyle starting from the 15th century (23,81).

The later Kipchak archaeological monuments found in the Karachay-Balkar region are stone statues. These stone statues were typically placed in front of burial monuments. However, due to their relocation by locals, they are often discovered far from their original sites. It is noteworthy that Kipchak statues are scattered over a large area in the North Caucasus, including the Karachay region (see map 3). The first information about Kipchak statues was provided by the Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi (205,1). The first mention of Kipchak statues in Russian sources dates back to 1569, attributed to an unknown witness of the Turkish-Tatar campaign to Azov and Astrakhan. Kipchak statues received significant attention after that. The first researcher of Kipchak statues was academician P. S. Pallas (171,13). Pallas described Kipchak statues along the Tashly River, near the ruins of the city of Magyar, and along the banks of the Kuma River, noting the presence of female statues among them. In the 1840s, Klapproth studied the statues around Stavropol, and in the 1880s, Y. D. Felitsyn researched them. Felitsyn not only described the statues but also provided a map of their distribution (201,165; 205.43). Today, Kipchak statues are preserved in museums in Armavir, Novocherkassk, Pyatigorsk, Taganrog, Krasnodar, and Cherkessk. The study of Kipchak statues is crucial for tracing both Kipchak and Karachay-Balkar ethnographic parallels. The statues accurately depict the clothing, weapons, and headgear of the Kipchaks. Researchers note parallels between the attire and weapons depicted on the statues and those of the Karachay-Balkar people. The medieval clothing of the North Caucasian peoples has been studied extensively by H. H. Bichiev and Z. V. Dode. Their research reveals significant similarities between Kipchak clothing and the clothing of the Karachay-Balkars, as well as the Alans, Adyghe (Kabardians), and Kumyks, along with similarities in clothing terminology



The Kumyks are another people in the North Caucasus influenced by the Kipchaks. The Kipchaks' migration into Kumyk territories dates to the mid-11th century. According to historians, the Kipchaks were the dominant political force in Northeast Dagestan from the late 11th century until the Mongol-Tatar invasions (19,133). Both Russian and Muslim sources, as well as Georgian chronicles, refer to Kipchak tribes in these areas as the "Derbent Kipchaks." Written sources indicate that the "Derbent Kipchaks" had an independent political structure. This is evidenced by the Derbent Kipchaks opposing the Georgian king David IV's campaign against Derbent and Shirvan, which was led by a Kipchak army (25; 27,25; 36,111).

After the fall of the Khazar Khaganate in 965, the Kipchak city of Saksin emerged in the lower Volga region, near the former Khazar capital of Itil. During the Kipchak era, Saksin was a crucial trading post on the Volga-Caspian trade route. Goods from the Near and Middle East were transported through Saksin along the Volga to Kama Bolgaria. After the Mongol-Tatar invasion, the inhabitants of Saksin, including the Kipchaks, sought refuge with the Bolgars.

The Kipchaks left behind the Miatlin burial complex in Northeast Dagestan, within Kumyk territories. The kurgans are located along the middle reaches of the Sulak River in North Dagestan. These kurgans were first studied in the 1950s by archaeologist M. I. Pikul, who initially classified them as Muslim graves (169,77).

Like during the Khazar period, the western Caspian lowlands served not only peaceful but also military purposes during the Kipchak era. It is known that in the 12th century, Russian military ships moved along the Volga towards the Caucasian shores. It is believed that the Kipchak-Saksins, along with Russian naval forces, participated in attacks on the Muslim states of the southwestern Caspian coast. V. V. Bartold writes that the Kipchaks continued to raid Muslim territories, sometimes with the intent to conquer. In the 12th century, Muslims lost control of Derbent and even several areas to the south for some time. The Georgian chronicles mention the Derbent Kipchaks (29, 25; 45,903). It is

likely that by the Mongol period, the steppe Kipchaks had settled in Dagestan, becoming a significant political force.

The extensive trade and cultural relations between the Kipchak steppe and the South Caucasus are confirmed by various facts. For instance, incendiary weapons loaded with combustible substances, such as oil, found their way into the Kipchak army. Such weapons could only have come from the eastern South Caucasus and through Dagestan. Russian chronicles report the use of these weapons in battles against the Russians.

An anonymous Georgian historian from the 12th century writes about King David IV's campaign in Dagestan in 1123, noting that King David defeated the Derbent Kipchaks and the Laks. It should be noted that in Georgian sources, the Laks refer to the mountain dwellers of Dagestan (143,32). The Derbent Kipchaks likely lived in the lowlands, with some possibly settling in the highland plateau of Dagestan.

According to Georgian chronicler Cuanşer, who lived at the end of the 11th century, the Kipchaks occupied the plains of the North Caucasus, displacing not only the Pechenegs but also the Jiks (referred to as Adyghe in Georgian sources) (92). In "Kartlis Tsovreba," Kipchakia is portrayed as one of the powerful states in the North Caucasus during that time, and it is even referred to as "Didi Kivçakti" – Great Kipchakia (159,29; 160,122). The presence of a large Kipchak army in the North Caucasus is also indicated by the fact that half a million Kipchaks were resettled to Georgia. This resettlement took place at the request of King David IV between 1118 and 1120 and had nothing to do with Atrak's flight to the North Caucasus. The Kipchaks settled in Georgia included forty thousand warriors, five thousand of whom formed King David IV's personal guard. Undoubtedly, King David's marriage to Atrak's daughter, Gurandukht, played a crucial role in this resettlement. Interestingly, the "Kartlis Tsovreba" refers to her as the queen of all Georgia (70,27). It is hard to believe that King David would marry the daughter of a ruler in exile. Atrak Sharukanovich's high status in the North Caucasus can be inferred from the mere title given to him by the Georgian chroniclers, indicating that in the mind of the Georgian chronicler, Otrok was not just a leader of Kipchak migrants (eristavi), as

accepted in historiography, but the supreme ruler of Kipchakia in the North Caucasus (127, 360).

However, it would be incorrect to imagine Kipchakia in the North Caucasus as a centralized state governed by a monarch (mere). It should be noted that most Georgian sources refer to Atrak Sharukanovich as the leader, not the king, of the Kipchaks. Some Georgian sources suggest that patriarchal relations existed among the Kipchaks, which is evident from the features discovered during archaeological excavations.

A large mass of Kipchaks embarked on a long journey from their lands in the early decades of the 11th century. This was economically driven by their nomadic lifestyle and socially by their military democracy. The Kipchak army was led by strict and talented commanders. Due to a decline in economic and social development, the acquisition of new lands became necessary.

The conquest of the southern steppes began with the more fertile areas of the lower Dnieper and Don, and the Azov region. It should be noted that these lands were inhabited by the Pechenegs. In the 7th century, the Bulgars, displaced from the eastern shores of the Azov, had settled in these areas. In the 11th century, some Bulgars continued to live there. Alans lived in the upper reaches of the northern Don (26, 120).

The remnants of the Pecheneg and Uz (Oghuz) armies played a significant role in the formation of Kipchak society. This is primarily evidenced by the diversity of burial customs. Generally, there were many similarities in the ethnic customs of these peoples. The deceased's relatives had the important task of preparing the deceased for the afterlife. The differences lay mainly in the details of this custom (24; 9,133,300).

The Kipchaks managed to gain access to European lands. However, they were obstructed by the Greeks and Romans, who secretly aided the Alans and sought to strike through them. It is believed that "Don" means "water" in the Alan language. The Kipchaks needed not only water but also the European steppes (62,23).

Thus, the Kipchaks' settlement in the North Caucasus did not occur later than the mid-11th century. Initially, the Kipchaks settled in these areas as small tribes, but over

time, an ethnic convergence process took place among them, resulting in the formation of two relatively monolithic confederations. The North Caucasus became part of one of these confederations, with its capital in the city of Sunja. The Kipchaks actively participated in the ethnic formation of the North Caucasian peoples and even played a decisive role in the origins of some ethnic groups. This is evidenced by archaeological and ethnographic sources as well as linguistic materials.

### ***Kipchaks in the South Caucasus in the 11th-13th Centuries***

The Kipchaks played an active role in the ethno-political life of not only the North Caucasus but also the South Caucasus peoples. From the 11th century onwards, Georgian authors were already aware of the Kipchaks. By the early 12th century, the Kipchaks began to actively participate in the political life of the South Caucasus. There is no significant disagreement among sources regarding how the Kipchaks arrived in the Caucasus. Upon investigation, it becomes clear that the Kipchaks came to the South Caucasus via two main routes:

1. The relocation policy of South Caucasus rulers. Georgian kings, in particular, were notable for this.

2. Purchasing through slave markets and serving in the armies of other countries as ghulams or mamluks. The Atabeg states exemplify this, with the Eldiguzid Atabeg state, led by Shamsaddin Eldiguz, being more powerful both militarily and economically. Additionally, the Christian Atabegs of Akhaltsikhe in the South Caucasus were also ruled by a Kipchak dynasty.

The Kipchaks were known in South Caucasus sources even before they became politically active in the region. The first information about the Kipchaks came from Georgian sources. Interestingly, the Georgian chronicle "Matiane Kartlisa" does not mention the Kipchaks. However, Leonti Mroveli's "Kartli Sxovreba" does provide information about the Kipchaks, referring to them as "buntürklar" (33, 34). This term was previously used for the Bulgarians. This can be explained in two ways: first, the Georgians quickly recognized that the Kipchaks and Bulgarians shared a common origin; second,

this name indicates that the Kipchaks lived alongside the Bulgarians. Another Georgian historian, Juanşer, also provides information about the Kipchaks in his book "The Life of Vakhtang Gorgasali." Although there are some inconsistencies in Juanşer's work, he accurately describes the ethnic processes, such as the westward migration of the Pechenegs and the displacement of some North Caucasian tribes, and gives a detailed account of the Kipchaks' migration to the Caucasus .

Georgian sources were able to trace the movements of the Kipchaks in the Caucasus. For example, the Anonymous "Georgian Chronicle" provides information about the Kipchaks' activities in Dagestan, referring to them as the "Derbent Kipchaks" (70, 23). This shows that the Kipchaks operated in separate tribes within the Caucasus. When discussing IV David's campaign against Derbent, the source notes that the "Derbent Kipchaks" opposed him (70, 24). This indicates that the Kipchaks' activities in the Caucasus did not go unnoticed by the Georgians. As mentioned earlier, Georgian chroniclers paid special attention to the anthropological structure, ethnic composition, and activities of the Kipchaks in the North Caucasus and Georgia.

From the information provided by Georgian sources, it is evident that relations between the Kipchaks and Georgia existed even before the Kipchaks were relocated to Georgia. All Georgian sources mention that IV David had kinship ties with the Kipchaks even before their relocation to Georgi.

At the time of the Kipchaks' relocation to Georgia, the South Caucasus consisted of small and large states either under Seljuk control or vassal dependencies of the Seljuk Empire. Georgia itself was composed of small states such as Javakheti, Imereti, Svaneti, Kartli, and Kakheti. In the mid-11th century, the Kartli kings were fighting to unify Georgia into a single state. However, the strengthening of the Georgian kingdom was accompanied by aggressive campaigns against neighboring Azerbaijani states. The Georgians were particularly keen to capture Tbilisi and Dvin (Debil). However, the Seljuk conquest of Azerbaijan temporarily halted the Georgians' ambitions for a few decades. After the assassination of Seljuk Sultan Malik Shah by the Ismailis in 1092, the Seljuk

Empire began to weaken. By the early 12th century, the state had lost its unity due to external pressures and the rising power of local feudal lords. It is clear that external enemies, including the Georgians, took advantage of this. IV David used the Seljuks' weakness to his advantage by first eliminating the social power of the large feudal lords, the mdabiuri, executing many of them, including Baqvashi. This strengthened his rule in Georgia (54, 159). In 1104, IV David captured Kakheti, significantly increasing his political influence (54, 160). Although the Seljuk governor of Ganja, along with his army, opposed him, IV David defeated them in the 1104 Battle of Ertzukhi. IV David's next reform was the church reform. The Ruis-Urbnis church assembly convened in 1103, bringing the church fully under state control. This would prove very beneficial to IV David in the future. Additionally, he carried out administrative reforms for more effective governance.

After consolidating his position in the state, IV David actively prepared to fight against the Seljuks. The political situation in the Russian and North Caucasian steppes also created favorable opportunities for IV David. Between 1104 and 1115, Russian Prince Vladimir Monomakh dealt a significant blow to the Kipchaks, scattering them (17, 69). As a result, the Kipchaks began to retreat, with some tribes seeking refuge in other countries.

There were already political connections between the Kipchaks and IV David. According to the Georgian chronicle, IV David was married to Gurandukht, the daughter of Kipchak ruler Atrak, the son of Sharukan (29, 35). In the early years of IV David's reign, the Kartli kingdom's army was small, weak, and undisciplined. IV David first reorganized his existing army, restoring discipline and fighting spirit. He removed large feudal lords from the army and introduced the "dideoba" system, allocating land for military service. To boost the army's morale, IV David also conducted small military operations against the Seljuks. However, as always, a politically favorable moment for war was awaited. In 1110, the Georgian armies captured Samshvilde, taking most of Lower Kakheti. In 1115, the present-day Rustavi region was occupied (64, 303). In 1117,

the border town of Qishi in Eretia was captured. However, IV David's military objectives extended beyond unifying Georgia. His main goal was to capture the upper Kura region, including Tbilisi, and Western Azerbaijani lands, and to bring the Shirvan region under his control . A small, disciplined, and capable army could not achieve such a grand objective. Therefore, IV David needed to quickly create a large and powerful military force. This force was the Kipchaks .The chronicler notes that IV David was aware of the Kipchaks' strength from the beginning , and he calls his wife Gurandukht "holy" Gurandukht was the daughter of the Kipchak ruler. Historians date IV David's kinship with Atrak to 1106 . IV David used this marriage to gain the Kipchaks' consent to move to Georgia. He sent his close associate Georgi Chkondideli to the Kipchaks. However, IV David had to solve two issues: the stance of Russian Prince Vladimir Monomakh and the hostility between the Alans and the Kipchaks (54, 194). When diplomatic negotiations failed, IV David captured several Alan fortresses, forcing them to make peace with the Kipchaks .Some Georgian sources indicate that IV David managed to reach an understanding with the Alans. For example, Leonti Mroveli mentions that IV David, along with his close associates, negotiated with the Alans, who welcomed him warmly .

In any case, IV David succeeded in relocating the Kipchaks to Georgia without obstacles. Some Georgian historians try to downplay the Kipchaks' activities in Georgia and reduce the number of Kipchaks who moved to Georgia by any means possible. ###  
The Relocation of Kipchaks to Georgia by IV David

Historians have different views on the date of IV David's relocation of the Kipchaks to Georgia. Most historians date the relocation to 1118-1120, long after IV David's marriage to Gurandukht. However, some historians, such as Quili Alazania, argue that the relocation occurred as early as 1106. Alazania links IV David's active military operations against the Seljuks and his successes in unifying other territories to this relocation. Alazania bases this on the unanimous note in sources that IV David initially had no significant army. It would have been impossible to create a strong and numerous army in such a short time from internal resources alone. Additionally, there must have been a

compelling reason for IV David to marry Gurandukht, Atrak's daughter. Considering these arguments, Alazania suggests that the relocation of the Kipchaks happened earlier. This view seems plausible, especially when considering the tendency of Georgian historians to downplay the role of the Kipchaks in the Georgian army. The idea that the relocation occurred in 1118-1120 was first proposed by Georgian historian Javakhishvili, and it is primarily supported by Georgian historians (29, 123).

While attempting to relocate a large number of Kipchaks, IV David also tried to improve relations with Russian Prince Vladimir Monomakh. According to sources, IV David sent "trusted individuals" to Kiev to negotiate with Vladimir Monomakh simultaneously with the Kipchak relocation (72; 151, 50). Another source, Halebli Pavel, indicates that IV David personally traveled to Kiev to establish normal relations and seek assistance. The Prince of Kiev promised to help and, according to sources, even provided military units to David.

According to Russian chronicles, IV David relocated the Kipchaks through the "Iron Gates." Georgian historians believe that the "Iron Gates" refers to the Darial Gorge (51, 52). One interesting point to consider is the correspondence between IV David and the rulers of Turkic Muslim states. It is notable that in these letters, Muslim leaders refer to IV David as the "ruler of the Abkhazians." As Metreveli notes, "Abkhazia" referred to Georgia at that time. However, in some letters, IV David is addressed as the "defender of peoples, the ruler of Georgians, Abkhazians, Shakas, Alans, and Khazars." If we consider that Muslim authors referred to Georgians as Abkhazians, the question of the identity of Georgian tribes remains open. Metreveli equates "Georgians" with the term "Gurjs." However, if Abkhazians are also considered Georgian, it creates an interesting contradiction. From the address, it is evident that a distinction was made between Abkhazians and "Georgians." It is likely that by "Georgians," the Muslim authors meant the Kipchaks who had settled in the area (11, 235).



Kiev had its interests in helping IV David. By doing so, the Kiev state achieved the fragmentation of the Kipchaks. Therefore, Vladimir Monomakh responded positively to IV David's proposal. After a portion of the Kipchaks relocated to Georgia in 1118, Vladimir Monomakh organized a large campaign against the Kipchaks in 1120 with a substantial army. The weakened Kipchaks were forced to retreat without engaging in battle. However, sources do not mention Vladimir Monomakh consolidating his position in these areas

Nevertheless, Vladimir Monomakh was able to benefit significantly from the weakening of the Kipchaks due to their relocation to Georgia.

During the Kipchak relocation, political disarray prevailed in the Muslim states neighboring Georgia. The city of Ganja and its surroundings were controlled by the semi-independent emir called the Atabeg of Ganja under the Seljuks (7, 101), the Erzurum region and its surroundings were controlled by the Saltukids, Ahlat and Van were under the Sökmenids, Kemah, Erzincan, and Divriği were ruled by the Mengücekids, while Mardin, Hısn-ı Keyfa, and Harput were under the Artukids. The Shirvan region in the northern part of the South Caucasus was governed by the Shirvanshahs, while independent dynasties operated in Derbent and Shaki (36, 112). Additionally, the territory of Dagestan had separated from the Shirvan state, forming independent small communities and feudal states. These factors facilitated IV David's conquests and created conditions for the raiding campaigns of the nomadic Kipchaks.

The preparation of the Georgians against the Seljuks coincided with internal wars within the Seljuk state and the fierce struggle against the Crusades. This further facilitated IV David's extensive expansion plans.

IV David's military organizational efforts did not end with the relocation. Although sources do not provide exact details of the specific areas where the Kipchaks were settled, it is possible to approximately determine their locations. However, there are differences of opinion. Javakhishvili claims that IV David settled the Kipchaks in Kartli. Armenian scholar Yeremyan argues that they were settled in the Agartsin and Arichi regions (present-

day Armenia). As evidence, he cites the construction of the "Kipchakvank" church in the Kharic region by Zakare Mkhargrdzeli in 1206 and the mention of the name "Elbey" in the 1184 Agartsin inscription, which Yeremyan equates with the leader of the Georgian army, Kubasar. Mesxia suggests that the Kipchaks were settled in the Lower Kartli and Somkhiti regions, although he does not rule out their relocation to other areas (86, 35). According to Turkish and Azerbaijani scholars, most of the Kipchaks were settled in the Kura River and Chorokh basins, as well as the regions of Kutaisi and present-day Rustavi. This is evidenced by the Kipchak elements present in the lifestyle of Azerbaijanis living in Georgia, as well as the long-standing activity of the Kipchak-origin Atabegs in the Akhaltsikhe region (Kura and Chorokh basins). In this regard, the views of Azerbaijani and Turkish scholars seem more logical. However, the acceptance of Christianity by some Kipchaks indicates that they were not only relocated to the mentioned areas. According to Georgian sources, IV David decided to distribute the large number of Kipchaks across different regions of Georgia to keep them under control .

According to the agreement between IV David and the Kipchaks, the Kipchaks were to be given land, and in return, they were to provide one soldier per family. Additionally, to further bind the Kipchaks to state interests, he actively began to spread Christianity among them (64, 32; 65, 100).

Simultaneously with the arrival of the Kipchaks, IV David implemented a military reform. The reform divided the army into three parts: the permanent guard of ghulams, known as Monaspa (slave detachment), which some historians believe was composed of highland tribes (62, 97), while others argue it consisted of Kipchak slaves. According to medieval Muslim authors, the Georgian ruler's personal guard was composed of Kipchaks (5, 54). The second part of the army was mainly composed of Kipchaks, and the third part was the feudal army brought by governors and eristavs during wartime.

Additionally, IV David created a special body to lead the army, headed by the Amirspasalar. In battles, this position was replaced by a person with the title of Amirakhur (54, 163). The Kipchaks were organized into tribes, each led by a chief called Spasalar.

Looking at the title of the leader and the organization principle of the army, it is evident that IV David was inspired by the military organizational experience of the Seljuk Empire. Through the military reforms and the relocation of the Kipchaks, IV David formed a Georgian army with a core composed of 60,000 Kipchaks. As the chronicler notes, no previous ruler of Georgia had such a large and powerful army.

In 1118, Azerbaijan, Iran, Georgia, Iraq, Khorasan, Central Asia, and parts of Anatolia became part of the Iraq Seljuk Sultanate. However, the weakening of the Seljuk dynasty's power did not stop there. Soon, the Iraq Seljuk Sultanate was engulfed in civil wars. The militarily and economically strengthened Georgians took advantage of this and immediately began to move to capture Western Azerbaijani territories.

### ***The Kipchak Heritage in the Caucasus***

In 1223, after the disintegration of the South Caucasus countries, the Mongol-Tatars, under the leadership of commanders Jebe and Subede, entered the steppes of the North Caucasus through the Darband Pass. Ibn al-Athir writes: "Crossing the Shirvan Valley, the Tatars began to move through the territories inhabited by many peoples, including the Alans, Lezgins, and other Turkic tribes. They plundered and killed many Lezgins. Attacking the inhabitants of the countries they passed through, they reached the territory of the Alans. The Alans gathered a group of Kipchaks and started fighting the Tatars. Neither side could gain an advantage. We have already discussed the outcome of this battle in a previous chapter."

One of the issues that interests us is the information about the Kipchak group that retreated to the mountains. It is likely that these were Kipchaks who had settled down. According to the Sevastatsi chronicle, they requested five places from the Georgian king for settlement. It can be hypothesized that the Kipchaks settled in the mountainous valleys of Central Caucasus, alongside their mountain-dwelling kin, primarily the Alans, with whom they had long-standing friendly relations. The Kartlis Tsoxovreva notes that in 1118, King David united the Ossetians and the Kipchaks. Over 100 years had passed since then, and their friendship had strengthened. During a tense time, the Alans and Kipchaks jointly

opposed the common enemy—the Mongol-Tatar forces. Only through trickery did the enemy manage to break the Alan-Kipchak alliance, which proved costly for the Kipchaks who had left the Alans. It is not surprising that the survivors found refuge in the depths of the valleys, near the Alans they had temporarily left behind. This situation indicates that the inclusion of the Kipchaks into the Alan environment was peaceful. This act, as L.I. Lavrov, Y.P. Alekseyev, and many other researchers claim, laid the foundation for the formation of the Karachay-Balkar people. It is difficult to argue with this, and it is also hard to agree with L.I. Lavrov's claim that the ethnogenesis of the Karachays and Balkars began from this period. As proven by I. Miziev, Kh. Laypanov, T. Minayeva, and other scholars, the ethnic formation process of both the Karachays and Balkars started from ancient times, relying on a local ethnic substrate. Ignoring this fact would mean overlooking issues related to the emergence of the ethnic substrate. Some scholars consider the medieval Alans as the substrate, pointing out that they were predominantly a Turkic people, linking the ancient Koban archaeological culture with their name. Others approach the issue from a completely different context. However, verifying these views within the framework of historical research allows us to speak of the Karachay and Balkars as indigenous peoples of the Caucasus. Despite this, it is impossible to deny the role of Kipchak heritage in the ethnic formation process of the Karachay and Balkar Turks.

The special role of Kipchak heritage in the ethnic formation of the Karachay and Balkar peoples is primarily reflected in linguistic materials. Almost all scholars confirm that the Karachay and Balkar languages developed based on the Western Kipchak dialect of the Turkic languages. This is evidenced by the Karachay, Balkar, and Kipchak linguistic parallels mentioned above. The leading role of the Kipchaks in the ethnogenesis of the Kumyk people is also acknowledged by Kumyk historians themselves. Some Kumyk historians even believe that the Kipchaks are actually the modern Kumyks, and they sometimes write "Kumyks" instead of "Kipchaks" in their works. Historians do not doubt that the Kumyk language is almost identical to the Kipchak language. Another evidence proving that Kipchak traditions played a leading role in the ethnogenesis of the Karachay,

Balkar, and Kumyk peoples is the archaeological monuments, especially the burial monuments. All archaeologists associate the specific burial of women in graves, the positioning of the deceased towards the west or north, the mounds filled with stones from the soil surface, and the presence of either horse corpses or horse equipment in the graves with the Kipchaks. Interestingly, although the kurgans underwent significant changes during the Golden Horde era, the burial practices remained unchanged in subsequent periods (101, 124). All these signs have been preserved in the burial monuments of the Karachay, Balkar, and Kumyk peoples.

The third factor showing the role of the Kipchak element is ethnographic parallels. For instance, the Kipchak-Caucasian clothing parallels. The characteristic feature of Kipchak clothing is that men's and women's clothes are almost identical, with ornamental patterns dominating the attire. The clothes are designed to carry weapons or other tools, women's headgear is abundant and typically conical, undergarments fit tightly to the body, outerwear is designed for comfortable riding, the fronts are fastened from the left, the fronts are open from the foot side, boots are made of leather and tied to the clothing from above. This can also be clearly seen in the depiction of medieval Caucasian clothing. Although this style underwent some changes due to the ethnic mixing and layering processes between the Kipchaks and Caucasian peoples during the Golden Horde era, it retained its main features until the late 18th century.

Despite these facts, Karachays and Balkars, like the Kumyks, cannot be considered non-indigenous peoples in the Caucasus. The issue is not only that their formation process occurred in the Caucasus: their ethnogenesis is based on the local Caucasian substrate.

The Northern Caucasus Turks, who had settled in the region before the arrival of the Kipchaks within the Deshti Kipchak, probably did not intermingle with them. However, even in the 12th century, this process was not completed. Georgian chroniclers, well-informed about the ethnic composition of the Northern Caucasus, did not confuse the Boş-Türks with the Kipchaks for no reason. It is difficult to say whether they were Black Bulgars or came from Asia, but the fact remains: even in the 12th century, the Turkic

language was not the primary one in the Northern Caucasus. We talk about the “Kipchak heritage” by comparing it with other Turkic influences because the Polovtsian-Kipchaks left particularly distinctive traces in the culture of the modern Turkic-speaking peoples of the Northern Caucasus.

Sources confirm that Kipchak culture, primarily the influence of language, was the result of long-lasting and strong connections between the Kipchaks who fled to the mountains and the indigenous population of the Caucasian valleys. Interestingly, which monuments around Elbrus can be attributed to the Kipchak period of the 13th-14th centuries?

Truthfully, such monuments are still waiting for their researchers. The kurgan graves near the village of Upper Chegem in Balkaria, dating back to the 13th century, have great significance. They were investigated by G. I. Izhne. They included graves with horse burials. In one of the women’s graves, apart from bones and some items, remains of clothing were also found: leather shoes, a headgear, an undershirt, and trousers. The buried person was covered with a net of decorated thread. The cover of the clothing and the headgear resembled the 12th-14th century Kipchak clothing restored according to stone statues. Unfortunately, this is one of the few published monuments in Kabardin-Balkaria that can be attributed to the Polovtsians, as, according to all data, the formation of the Karachay-Balkar people took place in the eastern part of Elbrus, in the basins of the left tributaries of the Terek.

Another monument was investigated by I. M. Miziev in the Chegem Valley in mountainous Balkaria. It is a burial ground on Mount Kurnayat, southeast of the villages of Upper Balkaria. Twenty-six graves were opened in two groups. The first group included earlier graves from the 13th-14th centuries. All of them were entirely in stone boxes. The graves had no external features. The boxes contained collective burials from different periods, probably family graves. The direction of the burials was always towards the west. The inventory included items characteristic of nomadic life, such as bronze earrings in the form of a question mark, ending with beads and a button-bell. This form of earrings is

characteristic of the late Kipchak period. The researcher I. M. Miziev notes that the group burials reflect elements of the local early medieval tradition associated with the subsequent sedentary culture. It can be assumed that the nomadic-style items indicate the connection of the local population with the incoming Kipchaks: it was during this period that the Kipchaks, fleeing from the Mongol-Tatar horrors, retreated to the mountain regions of Balkaria (75, 43).

The second group of graves in the Kurnayat cemetery, dating to the 14th-16th centuries, is of particular interest. These graves, although placed in stone boxes, clearly show nomadic characteristics in the burial ceremony. All the graves have a circular stone protrusion, the kurgan graves are filled with numerous stones. A thick stone slab lies under the grave, covering the box like those of the first group. All graves are for single individuals. Bones are placed either in a wooden box or a wooden log, both of which are tightly fastened with iron bands. The inventory of the graves is similar to that of the first group.

The changes in the burial ceremony observed in the later group of the Kurnayat cemetery reflect the gradual disappearance of the local tradition and indicate the mixing of the incoming nomads with the aborigines in the subsequent stage. It is noteworthy that the ceramics characteristic of the previous period are absent in the inventory of these graves. The Kurnayat cemetery should be regarded as an extremely valuable scientific monument as it reflects the initial phase of the formation of the Karachay-Balkar people. Conducting a precise comparative study of the skulls of both groups is crucial (41, 262). This research should show the direction of changes in the anthropological type of the population known as Balkar in ancient times and the factors influencing it.

The emergence of nomadic burials, especially the Polovtsian burials in Upper Chegem, in Balkaria can be associated with the destruction of the Alan settlements in the Zayukov, Baksan, and Nalchik regions. A. A. Iessen writes that significant changes in the composition of archaeological monuments considered in the 11th-14th centuries should

be noted. He then explains what these changes consisted of: "Alan settlements are destroyed, and rich cemeteries are wiped out" .

All these changes are largely connected with the movement of the Polovtsians into Alania: it is to this period that the Kipchak burials in Upper Chegem, as well as the halt of life in the settlements in Kabardin-Balkaria, belong.

Thus, the Turkic-speaking zone expanded in the central part of the Northern Caucasus, its formation approximately dating back to the Bulgar-Khazar period. The Turkic language was already heard in this zone even before the Kipchaks. This is evidenced by the runic inscriptions in Khumar. The toponymy of Kabardin-Balkaria and the Elbrus foothill region (Turkic) indicates the strengthening of the Turkic language in this region (87, 101).

Monuments confirming the information of Ibn al-Athir about the retreat of a part of the Kipchaks to the mountains after the Mongol-Tatar invasion are located in the Elbrus region, situated along the upper reaches of the Kuban River. These are kurgan burials.

V. M. Sysoyev wrote the following about these burials: "Along the left side of the Ulukam River, opposite Khurzuk and towards lower Uchkulan, there were several kurgans covered with stones... Here I carried out excavations in two places. In the first case, at a depth of one arshin, under stones and a thin layer, they found bones in a wooden grave made of two logs. The bones lay on their back, with the head towards the west and the face turned south. On the right side of the bones was a large iron knife. In the second case, bones were found under stones at a depth of one arshin, along with three iron bands, an iron knife, an iron flint, and a small ring". Based on the similarity with other North Caucasian burials of this type, V.P. Alekseyev dates the Ulukam kurgans to the 14th-16th centuries. According to him, these graves belonged to the early Karachays who entered the upper reaches of the Kuban before the mass settlement of newcomers from Greater Karachay and Baksan (8, 28).



The wider distribution of stone graves dates back to the late Kipchak period (the second half of the 13th century - 14th centuries). Wooden graves in Upper Chegem, similar to Polovtsian wooden graves, also belong to the end of the 13th century to the 14th century. It is highly probable that the Ulukam kurgans should also be noted within this chronological framework: there is no reason to extend their history.

The tradition of building settlements in Greater Karachay dates back to ancient times and is probably related to the Kipchak nomads to some extent. In such settlements, the nomads settled down. Among researchers of material culture, the idea has long formed that woolen products widely used in the household of sedentary peoples can be attributed to Kipchak heritage. Dode, who made significant contributions to the study of the material culture of the Karachays, particularly notes that felt played an important and significant role in organizing the house (95, 67). The long and varied felt was placed on the same shelf as beds and chests: a strip of fabric, possibly even felt, was drawn along the top of the entire wall. The decoration of the house in this way with felt, as well as their placement in horizontal strips, resembles the order of nomadic yurts. And we also believe that by nomads we mean the Polovtsian-Kipchaks. Recall that among the Crimean Tatars, the successors of the Polovtsians, felt was a universal material in everyday life.

When talking about the Kipchak heritage, it is impossible not to mention the Armenian-Gregorian Kipchaks. For the first time, Kipchak texts in Armenian script were published by the church figure Akop and his brother Aksent in Ukraine in the 1620s. The issue of the activity of the Armenian-Gregorian Kipchaks was touched upon by the Russian scientist Garkavets, who showed that religious texts used in Armenian colonies in Crimea, Ukraine, and Poland in the 14th-15th centuries were written in Kipchak using the Armenian alphabet. Later, this issue was also addressed by the Armenian scientist Patkanian, who showed Kipchak churches in Armenia in parallel, indicating that these communities originated from Armenia. However, Patkanian tries to prove that these communities were Armenians who lived among the Kipchaks for a long time and became Kipchakized. Garkavets, who published the complete collection of Armenian-Kipchak texts, showed that

the first Armenian colonies appeared in the 14th century, but he approached the issue of their ethnic identity with caution .

Georgian scholars have also touched upon Kipchak texts written in Armenian letters and the problem of Gregorian Kipchaks in general. They criticized the idea that Gregorian Kipchaks were Armenians and showed that the Gregorian Kipchaks living in Ani and Samskhe were far from being Armenian (43, 56).

Turkish scholars have also addressed the issue of Gregorian Kipchaks. Fahrettin Kırzioğlu noted that the Gregorian Kipchaks had no connection with Armenians by origin, and that they had become Christians under the influence of the local religion and were called Armenians due to their religion. Kazakh scholar Janaydarov also confirms this. Many Turkish scholars share the same opinion. In general, sources confirm that the Kipchaks lived in the Kingdom of Ani and adopted both Orthodox and Gregorian Christianity. This is also confirmed by the attention paid by David IV the Builder to the conquest of the Kingdom of Ani and the appointment of representatives of the Orbelian family of Kipchak origin as governors there (18, 21). After the Mongol occupation of Ani in 1263, the migration of Gregorian Armenian-Kipchaks to Crimea began. By the beginning of the 14th century, there were already many colonies of Armenian-Kipchaks in present-day Ukraine. Despite their writings being in the Armenian alphabet, their language and customs were Kipchak.

Talking about the Kipchak heritage, it is impossible not to mention the Nogais. In 1390, Edigey Khan, the leader of the Mangit tribe from the Golden Horde-Mongol tribes, declared his independence, establishing a separate Horde in the steppes of Northern Kazakhstan and Southern Ural. Shortly thereafter, he extended his influence to the territories of the Northern Caucasus. However, in the 1550s, the Little Nogai state, a Kipchak-Mangit union, emerged in the Northern Caucasus (199, 281). However, ethnically, they differed from the Great Nogais by having a significant Kipchak ethnic element and Caucasian cultural influence. According to Trepavlov, one important reason for the constant political misunderstandings between these two states was ethnic differences.

## CONCLUSION

The ethno-political history of the Caucasus at the turn of the first and second millennia AD is characterized by its complexity and insufficient study. Overall, during this period, the Caucasus became a zone inhabited by numerous Turkic and Turkicized Mongol and Tungus tribes. The ethno-political and ethno-cultural history of these peoples was shaped by the repeated migrations of large groups of nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples. As a result, there were stages of mutual influence and interaction among various tribes. From the sources that provide information about the Kipchaks, it can be concluded that while the authors of these works provide data on the Kipchaks in relation to certain events, specific information about the Kipchak tribes themselves is not abundant. The data obtained from these sources are fragmentary, characterizing the lives of the Kipchaks in different areas and at different times. This situation necessitates a comprehensive approach to studying these sources, cross-verification, and the inclusion of additional archaeological, anthropological, and ethnographic materials. Only a thorough and multi-faceted study of these sources can lead to certain conclusions about the history of the Kipchaks, who inhabited a significant portion of the Eurasian steppes.

The main obstacles to studying the history of the Kipchaks in the Caucasus include historians' tendencies to approach the history of their own peoples from a political context, often trying to extend their history as far back as possible. Additionally, there has been a historically cold attitude towards the Kipchaks in Soviet and later Russian historiography.

However, research shows that the Kipchaks played a significant role in both the political and ethnic landscapes of the Caucasus, impacting the political life of both North and South Caucasus states. Examples include the activities of the Kipchaks in Georgia, their role in the Atabeyli state of Azerbaijan, and the long-standing Christian Atabeyli states in the Akhaltsikhe region.

The Kipchaks played a significant and, in many respects, progressive role in the history of the Caucasus. For example, during the Mongol invasions, the task of mobilizing local peoples for resistance and protecting them often fell to the Kipchaks. It may be due

to the Kipchaks that even the political elites of non-Turkic Caucasian peoples consisted of Turks.

The Kipchaks had an invaluable role in the unification and growth of Georgia into a major state in the Caucasus. From the time of David IV, the Kipchaks held significant positions in both the army and state administration, a situation that continued until the reign of Queen Rusudan. Many noble Georgian families are known to have Kipchak origins, including the Orbeliani, Akhaltsikhli, and Mkhargdzeli (Long-Armed) families.

The Kipchaks also played a special role in the ancestry of the Kumyks, Alans, Karachays, and Balkars in the North Caucasus. Archaeological excavations, burial monuments, and ethnographic parallels support this. The presence of female statues in Karachay burial monuments, the scattering of stones over the kurgans, and the poverty of the grave goods all indicate that the Kipchak heritage persisted in the customs of many peoples for a long time. Linguistic parallels between Karachay and Kumyk languages further demonstrate the enduring presence of Kipchak heritage.

The Mongol invasions highlighted the significant role of the Kipchak component in the Caucasus. Initial observations suggest a particularly harsh stance of the Mongols towards the Kipchaks, with Ibn al-Athir noting that slave markets were overflowing with Kipchak slaves due to the Mongol campaigns. However, a deeper analysis reveals a different picture. The main population of the Caucasus and Volga cities under the former Golden Horde was Kipchak, and the Mongols themselves adopted the Kipchak language, indicating close mutual understanding between the two groups. Some Kipchak tribes even benefited from the Mongol invasions. For example, in 1228, the Durut tribe used the Mongol attacks on the Toksoba to gain superiority in the Russian steppes. Therefore, during the Mongol invasions, it was more a matter of transformation rather than the loss or dispersal of the Kipchaks. It is no coincidence that the "History of Derbent" published in 1906 refers to the Golden Horde state as the Kipchak state.

Despite being defeated by the Mongols, the Kipchaks retained their roles in the administration of the Hulagu state, the ethnic composition of the Caucasus peoples, and

the ruling elite of the Caucasian peoples. Thus, after the disintegration of the Golden Horde state, the Caucasian peoples gained their independence, and the ruling Kipchak-descended class maintained its positions.

In conclusion, it must be stated that the Kipchaks played an essential, and sometimes decisive, role in the ethnic, political, and social life of the North and South Caucasian peoples from the 11th to the 13th centuries.

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