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## Silver Vessels of the Golden Horde Era from the Middle Ob Basin

*This article addresses one of the most informative archaeological sources for reconstructing medieval history—imported silver dishware, which is abundant in northwestern Siberia. Based on three newly described silver vessels of the Golden Horde Age from the Saigatino I sanctuary in the Surgut region of the Ob basin, the possible attribution of these and similar specimens from Siberia and the Urals is discussed. Locating the places where such items were made is difficult for reasons relating to the functioning of individual workshops and of the silversmiths' schools in general. Nevertheless, a suggestion is made that the workshops were located in the Bulgar Ulus—a successor of the Volga Bulgaria, with its rich tradition of manufacturing jewelry and transporting it along trade routes directed north to the western Urals and Western Siberia. The time and the routes whereby the Golden Horde toreutics were brought to Western Siberia are assessed. All finds in this region are clustered within a small area in the Surgut region of the Ob, while similar but isolated finds in the Perm area and in the northern Urals mark the possible trade routes. The question is raised as to whether the finds of imported silverware in Western Siberia fall within the territory of the medieval Ob principalities of Koda, Bardakov, and Kunovat. The appearance of personal hoards may indicate the emergence of a new elite. Generally, the imported silver dishware of the Golden Horde age is highly relevant to social developments in medieval Western Siberia.*

Keywords: Middle Ages, Golden Horde, Bulgar Ulus, silver dishware, Surgut, Ob basin, Ob principalities.

### Introduction

Silver dishware of the Middle Ages is one of the most informative sources on the history not only of the countries where it was produced (the developed civilizations of the East and West of Eurasia) but also of its “consumers”, possibly even “secondary consumers”—the population inhabiting the Northern Kama region and northwestern Siberia. B.I. Marschak observed that “there is no other type of sources that would show with such clarity the amazing integrity, even the compactness of the medieval world from Western Europe to China and from the Kama region to India” (1980: 3). However, in order to understand and evaluate the role of this source for the Ob North, we should have

long ago abandoned the designations of the “Ob basin” and “northwestern Siberia” for indicating the places of finds/accumulations of vessels belonging to a particular circle. The need for this is confirmed, for example, by the data on the discovery of silver dishware of the Golden Horde period in the limited space of the Surgut region of the Ob, mainly at the Saigatino locality. A large number of monuments of the Middle Ages are concentrated in this place. The collection of silver vessels of the Golden Horde period from Saigatino consists of six objects: three from burials, and three from the sanctuary. This is a very large collection. Three more vessels are known from the Middle Ob basin, including a cup from the Surgutsky District (Yakovlev, 2006), as well as a cup and stand (apparently from another cup), without the exact



location of the site where they were found. Not a single object of the Golden Horde toreutics has been found in the Lower Ob basin, although silver objects of the 13th–14th centuries and earlier time are not uncommon in that area (Sokrovishcha Priobya..., 2003: 33–34, 42–51, 70–71). All other Golden Horde vessels have been found in the forest-steppe region: on the Irtysh and in the Tarsky District of the former Tobolsk Governorate (Sokrovishcha Priobya, 1996: 200–207).

This article provides a detailed description of three vessels from the assemblage of the Saigatino sanctuary (they were published to some extent in the 1990s in rare publications which are hardly accessible today). The vessels have been restored and are now kept in the collection of the Surgut Museum of Local History\*. In addition, it is proposed that all vessels of the Golden Horde period discovered so far can be attributed to the products made by the artisans from the Bulgar Ulus of the Golden Horde. An overview of the processes is provided due to which the products of toreutics of the Golden Horde period reached the Surgut region of the Ob.

### History of the discovery of the hoard

A hoard of three silver vessels was accidentally found in 1987 on the site of the Saigatino I sanctuary, located on the periphery of the Saigatino I cemetery. Unfortunately, the materials of the Saigatino monuments have not yet been fully described, so it is important to restore an accurate picture of how they were discovered. It is known that the objects were located one on top of the other: a dish lay on the top bottom up; a lobed bowl, also upside down, was under the dish; underneath the bowl, there was a cup. The soldered handle of the cup lay separately.

Numerous objects (silver adornments and details of clothing, as well as dishware made of bronze and silver) have been found on the territory north of Saigatino, near the village of Zeleny Yar (Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug) during the excavation of burial grounds of the 9th–10th and 13th centuries. Some of the objects were definitely placed in a specific way, for example, some were laid next to a pottery vessel. The finds were interpreted as commemorative assemblages (Zeleny Yar..., 2005: 147–148, photographs on the colored insets). This interpretation was supported by the data on the situation at the present-day cemeteries of the Ob Ugrians, including those in the village of Zeleny Yar: after periodic visits to the graves of the relatives, the villagers left various objects (dishware, etc.), which served as gifts to the deceased, in the space between the graves. Among

the Ob-Ugrian peoples, it is forbidden to take back things which were brought to the cemetery or sanctuary.

### History of research

The first detailed publication of these objects and other silver vessels discovered in Saigatino came out in 1991. It entailed a catalog of the exhibition at the State Hermitage Museum dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the Oriental Department. The author of the introductory article and catalog descriptions of six vessels, including three found at the sanctuary, was M.G. Kramarovsky, who identified the finds as products of the “Ulus” layer of the Golden Horde artistic metalwork and dated them to the 13th–14th centuries (1991: 11–15). A brief description of individual things of the “set” without detailed attribution appeared in the book *Ugric Heritage: Antiquities of Western Siberia from Collections of the Ural University* (Ugorskoye nasledie..., 1994: 124–125). In article 78 of the catalog, *Treasures of the Ob Basin*, Kramarovsky mentioned a bowl, similar to the bowl on the stand from burial 31 at the Saigatino III cemetery (Sokrovishcha Priobya, 1996: 208–210). Kramarovsky wrote, “With the Saigatino finds... it has become possible to imagine the development of one of the central groups of the Golden Horde silver metalwork: in its decoration, a substitution of Islamic elements for the Far Eastern elements can be observed” (Ibid.: 208).

### Description of the objects

*Cup (traveling cup)* (Fig. 1). Silver, embossing, gilding, chasing. The vessel is a cup or, as similar objects are also called, a traveling cup with a rounded bottom and soldered handle. The diameter at the top is 8.2 cm; the diameter of the body is 9.2 cm; the total height is 6.3 cm; the length of the handle is 4.3 cm. The cup has been described in detail by Kramarovsky (1991: 25–26); it suffices here to give its description with a few clarifications. “A cup with straight vertical rim, bulging shoulders, and rounded bottom was made by chasing. The handle was attached to the rim on the inside. After it broke off, a new handle was soldered to the same place without removing the solder and the fragment of the old handle. The new handle of coarse work is flat; a pipe was soldered to its lower part. The second handle, in turn, came unsoldered and lay inside the cup”\*.

The ornamentation was made on the outside by a guide puncheon and round puncheon, and was gilded, possibly using amalgam. The rest of the vessel’s surface on the inside and outside is covered with silver amalgam.

\*We thank M.Y. Selyanina, the Director of the Surgut Museum of Local History, for the opportunity to publish the description of vessels from the Museum collection.

\*Currently, the vessel has been restored, and the handle has been soldered in place.





Fig. 1. Cup (traveling cup) from Saigatino.

The ornamental décor is located in two zones: along the rim and on the body. A vegetative shoot in the form of a smoothly curved vine with large semi-palmettes protruding from it is represented along the rim. The background is rather neatly embossed with a round puncheon; the leaves are rendered by lines grouped in arches with a flat puncheon. Three large medallions in the form of quatrefoils with a double border go down directly from the frame of the border; two medallions of the same shape but smaller are placed between them. A bird, a predator, and a hare are depicted in the large medallions against a background embossed with a round puncheon amidst floral ornamentation. The bird has wide wings and a large beak. The predator is a fantastic hybrid of a wolf and a bear: it has a narrow long muzzle and round ears; the outline of the figure is similar to a wolf; the hind legs are those of a bear, and a long fluffy tail going under the hind paw, is raised up. The hare is standing on its hind

paws; its front paws are raised. The heads of the animals are turned back; the feathers of the bird as well as the muscles and hair of the animals are rendered with lines. Small medallions enclose vegetative shoots against an embossed background” (Ibid.: 26).

We may add to this description that all the animals wear a kind of collar on their necks. The hare is depicted exaggeratedly large and is identified only by typical long ears, yet it more resembles a predator. A smooth short line goes from the outer corner of its eye. The medallion with the figure of the hare stands out as having the richest floral ornamentation.

*Lobed bowl* (Fig. 2). Silver, embossing, gilding, chasing. This is a small bowl with vertical rim, 12 convex lobes and, probably, a stand which was lost in ancient times. The diameter at the top is 14.3 cm; the height of the bowl is 4 cm. The edge of the rim is slightly thickened. At the bottom, there is a trace of soldering of the vessel’s foot. Ornamentation was executed on the outside with a graver and round puncheon; the relief pattern is covered with gilding in the medallions on the lobes of the bowl (Ibid.). The rim of the bowl is decorated with a band consisting of short lines grouped in arches; triangles made of three imprints of a round puncheon are inside and outside those arches. Twelve convex lobes, six of which are smooth and six decorated, are on the body of the bowl. Medallions in all six decorated lobes are surrounded by a frame separating the upper two-thirds of the area of the lobes, with the bottom portion undecorated. Three of the six medallions are decorated with floral ornamentation in the form of a lush shoot resembling a



Fig. 2. Lobed bowl from Saigatino. View of the outside (a) and the inside (b).



flower, which is located on a rounded stalk and surrounded by small leaves. Figures of herbivores appear in other medallions. Two medallions contain the representations of standing goats with long horns hanging on their back; the horns join the floral shoots. The animals have open mouths; something resembling a mane is on their necks; their eyes have lines extending from their outer corners; their front leg is raised; the ribs are marked on the torso; the lower abdomen and the hind thigh are ornamented with lines. A herbivore (goat?) lying with its legs folded under the belly is represented in the third medallion. A vegetative shoot is in its open mouth; a long line reaching almost to the neck is at the eye; there are some outgrowths remotely resembling feathers instead of horns. The torso of the animal is ornamented with lines, grouped in arches. The background under the representations on all the medallions is embossed with a round puncheon.

*Dish* (Fig. 3). Silver, embossing, gilding, chasing. This is a deep dish with an outwardly bent rim; a convex medallion is attached to the center. The diameter of the dish is 25.4 cm; the height is 4.4 cm; the width of the rim is 1.4 cm. The dish is made of a thin sheet of silver; the edge of the rim is slightly thickened. Specially made holes are located in three places on the rim; it is possible that some elements of additional decoration were attached there. According to Kramarovsky, these were umbos (Ibid.: 27). The central medallion of the dish is attached on two pins; there is a roughly punched square hole in its center. Ornamental décor on the dish and the entire central medallion are gilded.

The central medallion consists of a flat circle and a raised eight-petalled rosette in its center. The circle is ornamented by short lines grouped in arches and executed with a graver; the imprints of a round puncheon grouped in threes are above and below the arches. The rosette is ornamented in the same way. The rest of the dish is decorated with a pattern made by a rotating tool similar to a compass. A frieze of leaf-shaped figures forming a zigzag line is located along the rim. The figures are gilded; the background under the figures is filled with imprints of a round puncheon.

The transition from the rim to the bottom of the dish is decorated with stylized figures in the form of five-partite palmettes and flowers of similar shape. The figures



Fig. 3. Dish from Saigatino.

are gilded and outlined with the imprints of a round puncheon. Compositions resembling the number eight, made up of two convex gilded circles and imprints of a round puncheon, are between them.

The pattern on the bottom of the dish consists of five circles with inscribed narrow six-petalled rosettes, connected by three-partite curvilinear figures. The figures and rosettes are gilded; the background under them is filled with imprints of a round puncheon. Three-partite figures in the form of leaves fastened by small convex circles are between the circles above and below. The figures are gilded; the background under them is also filled with imprints of a round puncheon.

### Parallels to the objects from the hoard

*Cup*. A vessel of almost the same shape and design was found in the village of Kamgort in the Cherdynsky District of the Perm Region. This cup was an accidental find made ca 1929. Until 1959, the cup was kept in the family of E.N. Afanasieva, who discovered it. This cup has been described in the book, *Cherdyn Hoards. Treasures of Archaeological Collections* (Cherdynskiye klady..., 2013: 48–50). In that publication, the vessel



was called a dipper, and the place where it is presently kept was not indicated. The cup from Saigatino and the find from the village of Kamgort are similar in terms of manufacturing techniques (chasing on silver, gilding ornamentation, and the use of embossing) and shape, although the Kamgort cup is somewhat more squat. These objects have handles of the same shape; the difference is that the handle of the Kamgort cup was manufactured simultaneously with the vessel, while the handle of the Saigatino cup is of coarser work and was installed instead of the lost one. Differences are found in the ornamentation along the rim of the cup: there is a bent vegetative shoot on the Saigatino cup, while the Kamgort cup has a band formed of lines grouped in arches, and imprints of a round puncheon. The composition of the décor on the body of the cups is the same: alternating larger and smaller medallions in the form of quatrefoils with a double outline of the contour; exclusively vegetative shoots are within the medallions only on the Kamgort cup. The technique of carrying out the ornamental décor and filling the background with the imprints of a round puncheon are similar.

Ornamentation along the rim of the vessel in the form of a curved vine with three-partite leaf–semi-palmettes is known from the cup found in the vicinity of the village of Ponil in the Ivdelsky District of Sverdlovsk Region (Gening, Kramarovskiy, 1973: Fig. 2–9; Vo dvortsakh..., 2008: 101), the cup found on the Maly Yugan River (Surgut region of the Ob) (Yakovlev, 2006: 145), as well as the goblet from the Irtysh River (Gening, Kramarovskiy, 1973: Fig. 14; Vo dvortsakh..., 2008: 101). The Saigatino cup is also similar to the Ivdel cup in the presence of alternating larger and smaller medallions in the form of quatrefoils in their décor. All the above vessels have a double outlining of the medallions, the separation of the vegetative shoot with chased lines grouped in arches, and filling of the background of the ornamentation with the imprints of a round puncheon. Some representations of animals are also similar. Thus, there is a figure of a large animal with hare ears on the cup from the Maly Yugan River, and the figures of large birds of prey with widespread wings appear on two medallions on the Ivdel cup. Virtually all vessels of this circle show representations of animals with the tail passed under the hind thigh and ending with a large palmetto.

*Lobed bowl.* The collection of the Yamal-Nenets Regional Museum Complex of I.S. Shemanovsky includes a lobed bowl (Fig. 4), almost completely analogous to the Saigatino bowl\*. Even the sizes coincide: the diameter at

the top is 14 cm, and the height is 4.0 and 3.8 cm. Both bowls are thin-walled, made of dark-colored silver, and decorated with 12 lobes; six of the lobes are smooth and six are decorated. Representations of vegetative shoots and animals made by chasing and gilding alternate in the ornamented lobes of both bowls. The background is decorated with the imprints of a round puncheon. The similarity is manifested in the decoration of the rim with a band of short lines grouped in arches, supplemented with the imprints of a round puncheon, as well as medallions which show the double outlining of the contour for the representation, cutting off the upper two-thirds of the lobe. Figures of animals are depicted against the background of curved vegetative shoots. The cups differ only in the characters represented in the medallions: they are goats (deer) on the Saigatino cup, while predatory animals with the tail passed under the hind thigh appear in two medallions, and a large fantastic bird is depicted in one medallion on the cup from the Museum collection. We should mention that both cups do not have stands; only traces of solder are visible on the bottom of the cups.

The alternation of smooth lobes and lobes with representations, as well as ornamentation along the rim, composed of short lines grouped in arches and imprints of a round puncheon, were found on a cup from the Perm Governorate (Smirnov, 1909: No. 223; Gening, Kramarovskiy, 1973: 10, fig. 3; Vo dvortsakh..., 2008: 101). Similar ornamentation along the rim decorated a cup from the Saigatino III cemetery (Sokrovishcha Priobya, 1996: 208–210). Lotus-like flowers in medallions with floral ornamentation resemble the cup from the village of Ponil (Gening, Kramarovskiy, 1973: Fig. 12). The animals represented in the medallions of the Saigatino cup are unique.

*Dish.* Objects which would be completely analogous to the Saigatino dish are unknown. We can only mention some parallels to the ornamental motifs of its decoration. Dishes with the central medallion riveted on two pins with umbos (not preserved) on the sides, going back to the period under consideration or an earlier time, have not been found in the Ob basin and the adjacent areas. The presence of a central hole in the medallion raises questions. All dishes known until today, which are simultaneous and approximately contemporaneous to the Saigatino dish, do not have any signs of assembled structures, and high relief in central medallions was chased together with the dish (cup) (see, for example, the well-known cup with the composition of Alexander's flight on griffins) (Sokrovishcha Priobya, 1996: 153).

The decoration of the Saigatino dish consists of two different parts: the central medallion and ornamentation on the bottom. The central medallion (convex eight-petalled rosette on a flat base) is decorated with a motif of short lines grouped in arches with the imprints of a round puncheon on the inside. This is typical of the

\*We express our gratitude to T.V. Koptseva, the Director of the Yamal-Nenets Regional Museum Complex of I.S. Shemanovsky, for the opportunity to publish the description of objects from the Museum collection.



Fig. 4. Lobed bowl from the collection of the Yamal-Nenets Regional Museum Complex of I.S. Shemanovsky. Side view (a) and bottom view (b).

whole group of lobed bowls and cups described above. Decoration on the bottom of the dish, made with a compass-like instrument, consisting of rosettes with six narrow petals, over which figures in the form of highly stylized five-partite palmettes and flowers were placed, finds parallels in another group of vessels. Burial 194 at the Saigatino IV cemetery contained a round bowl with similar decoration in the form of a rosette with six narrow petals on the bottom and five-partite palmettes along the edge (Kramarovsky, 1991: 25; Ugorskoye nasledie..., 1994: Fig. on p. 124). The parallels are manifested in the technique of executing the ornamentation on the inside with a flat puncheon, gilding the elements of the ornamental pattern, and placing the pattern against the background of the puncheon imprints. Almost the same bowl was found near the village of Gubdor in Cherdynsky Uyezd ca 1907 (Smirnov, 1909: 15; Cherdynskiye klady..., 2013: 28–30). Y.I. Smirnov attributed it to the “semi-European and semi-Asiatic” type (1909: 15). A belt cup from the collection of the Mardjani Foundation is decorated with similar ornamentation on the inside (Kramarovsky, 2013: 214–215). It is noteworthy that the décor was applied from the outside, and the handle with “fine and complete graphics of floral patterns” (Ibid.) is clearly discordant with the rest of the ornamentation. Kramarovsky mentioned a group of ten vessels, which included a cup from the collection of Mardjani, two cups from the excavations of N.I. Veselovsky (kept in the State Historical Museum, unpublished), two cups from random finds (?) (kept in the Odessa Archaeological Museum, unpublished), a cup from the Kashirsky District of the Voronezh Region, two finds from Saigatino, and a dipper with a handle in the form of a dragon protoma from the Saratov Museum of Local History (Ibid.: 214–217). Kramarovsky believes that they all could have been made in the same workshop (Ibid.).

### Attributing and dating the vessels

Attribution of the vessels from the assemblage of the Saigatino I sanctuary and vessels similar to them as an important part of the Golden Horde toreutics of the 13th–14th centuries, as well as their role in the formation of this type of art, has been many times addressed in the studies of Kramarovsky, who probably is currently the most authoritative expert on the Golden Horde artistic metalwork (Gening, Kramarovsky, 1973; Kramarovsky, 1991, 1996, 2008, 2012, 2013). Kramarovsky wrote about two interconnected strata of the Golden Horde



artistic metalwork: the “Imperial stratum”, which emerged within the Great Mongolian State (1211–1260), and the “Ulus stratum”, formed from the Chingissid tradition in the independent states of the descendants of Genghis Khan. Analyzing materials of the Saigatino burials and sanctuary, Kramarovsky made the following important conclusion, “With the Saigatino finds it has become possible to envision the development of one of the central groups of the Golden Horde silverwork” (1991: 15).

Thus, research into selected objects of toreutics of the Golden Horde period in the Surgut region of the Ob has made it possible to identify certain patterns of interaction between different cultures of the central part of Eurasia in the age of emergence and functioning of the Mongolian states. This can be considered a serious breakthrough in the history of the Eurasian Middle Ages, since until now the Mongolian state entities have been considered almost exclusively in their role as conquerors who destroyed the pre-Mongolian states of Europe and Asia. It seems possible to draw more specific but equally important conclusions concerning the mechanisms of this interaction. The question concerning the place where the Saigatino and similar vessels were produced has been repeatedly posed. Thus, it was suggested that these centers could have been located on the territory of the former Volga Bulgaria, that is, in the Bulgar Ulus of the Golden Horde (Fedorova, 1991: 202).

It is interesting to address the following questions: can all these objects be attributed to the production of specific Bulgar artisans who already worked in the Ulus area? Is such an accurate definition of the ethnicity of



the artisans generally possible? In this regard, we should cite a long quote from the study of K.A. Rudenko, “Jewelry workshops is a concept, which in this case is conventional. It means a group of artisans united by a certain similarity of creative style, who worked at the same time and probably in the same place (territory). They could have worked at their working place, in the household of a noble town dweller, at the court of the Emir, and in the country estate of a wealthy nobleman. Given the nature of the material and the working process, it is very difficult to find a specific place where the work was actually done”. Rudenko also gives an example, “Despite the rather large amount of archaeological evidence on jewelry production at the Bilyar fortified settlement, starting from raw materials to tools, it was not possible to find the workshop of the jeweler-silversmith” (2015: 70). Moreover, medieval craftsmanship in general does not easily fit a clear-cut ethnic and even state framework; it rather tends to be multiethnic. The Mongol wars of conquest contributed to this not to a small extent, which led to concentration (both forced and voluntary) of artisans of various professions and ethnicities in new centers. Training of artisans and their adherence to a certain style can be detected, but even in this case we cannot be sure of the exact location of the workshop or workshops. While working in these centers with new customers, the artisans had to take into consideration their tastes and needs, for example, the desire for uniformity. Marschak thus observed, “Everything associated with combat clothing and equipment, as well as with feasts and receptions, was largely unified” (1996: 42). He also emphasized the important role of Chinese artisans in the formation of the initial style of the Golden Horde toreutics. Imposition of various cultural influences (Iranian and Central Asian, then Slavic, Western European, and Byzantine on the “Chinese” impulse) created an amazing variety of products, which included silver and gold vessels, details of clothing, jewelry, and ceremonial weapons.

Although we are doubtful concerning the possibility for pinpointing the exact location where the Saigatino and similar other vessels were produced, we think that it might have been located on the territory of the Bulgar Ulus. This assumption is supported, in particular, by the products of the Volga Bulgar artisans: since the beginning of silvermaking in the 10th–11th centuries, it demonstrates “the organic combination of the traditions of the Turkic world, artistic techniques and subjects of the urban culture of Central Asia (first, pre-Islamic Sogdian, then Islamic) and pictorial elements inherent in the pagan population of the Urals and northwestern Siberia” (Fedorova, 2003a: 138). Our assumption is confirmed by the presence of a large amount of silver jewelry of the “Bulgar” circle in all assemblages associated with the period after the 13th century, including those at the Saigatino site.

### Golden Horde toreutics in the Ob basin

Considering the time and routes by which the Golden Horde toreutics moved to Western Siberia (the Ob basin, the Transurals), scholars write about this vast territory as having some kind of unity, “The archaeological objects (the Saigatino objects are meant – N.F.) belong to the Ob Ugrians” (Kramarovskiy, 1991: 11). In fact, starting from the turn of the eras and especially in the early second millennium AD, there was no longer territorial unity and a single historical destiny among the peoples inhabiting the northern, taiga, and tundra regions of Western Siberia. This is well confirmed by various sources, including the analysis of the localization of imported silver products of various groups in different regions of the Ob basin. Thus, Iranian silver metalwork of the 8th–9th centuries, Islamic products of the 10th–11th centuries, as well as Early Bulgar and Ural-Hungarian objects have been found in the basins of the Severnaya Sosva–Synya Rivers; Western European cups of the second half of the 12th century have been discovered (when the places of discovery are known) in the southeastern part of the Shuryshkarsky District of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, and round badges with the representations of a falconer have been found within the Surgut Uyezd–Berezovo Okrug on the territory of the present-day Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug (Fedorova, 2003b: 17; 2014: 164). The places where the objects of the Golden Horde toreutics have been discovered are concentrated in a more narrow area—the Surgut region of the Ob. Beyond that area, the vessels of the Golden Horde artisans, even if they occur, have been found in single numbers, while the collection from the Surgut area is more than representative, including eight vessels dating from the mid 13th to the first half of the 14th century. The only vessel (and, separately, the stand, most likely from another cup (Fig. 5)), kept in the collection of the Yamal-Nenets Regional Museum Complex of I.S. Shemanovskiy, is not associated with a particular location.

Another group of vessels has been found in southwestern Siberia, in the forest-steppe zone: in the Tarsky Okrug of the Tobolsk Governorate, or “on the Irtysh” (the territory of the Ulus of Shaban) (Rudenko, 2015: 33, map). Clearly, the level of communication between various groups of the Horde nobility within the forest-steppe and steppe zones was much higher than with the groups living in the taiga zone, including the Surgut region of the Ob, which in fact was never a part of the Chingissid Empire. In other words, silver vessels reached the North and the territories located to the south as a result of different processes.

For establishing the routes of how the objects of the “Saigatino group” could have reached Western Siberia or rather the Surgut region of the Ob, it is important to focus on the finds which partially mark these routes, such as



Fig. 5. Stand of the cup from the collection of the Yamal-Nenets Regional Museum Complex of I.S. Shemanovsky.



cups from the Perm Territory (the Perm cup, the Gubdor belt cup, and the Kamgort cup), and the cup from the Ivdelsky District (north of the Sverdlovsk Region). Close similarity of these items implies their manufacturing by the Golden Horde artisans working in a specific region. Previously it was assumed that this region was the former Volga Bulgaria, and later the Bulgar Ulus of the Golden Horde (Fedorova, 1991: 202). What evidence can support this assumption? Starting from the 10th century, trade routes from Volga Bulgaria to northwestern Siberia began to be marked by numerous imported things from silver dishware to a large amount of jewelry; their abundance became the reason for changes in the high-status set of jewelry and clothing accessories among the Western Siberian elite by the beginning of the second millennium AD (Fedorova, 2015: 80). It is possible to continue arguing what from this new set was manufactured by the Bulgar artisans, and what was produced by the jewelers from the Ural region, trained by the Bulgars (Rudenko, 2015; Belavin, 2000), but it is not critical for our case. The most important thing is that the Horde vessels most likely moved along the well-trodden track from the Bulgars through the northern Urals to the Ob basin, more precisely to the area of the present-day Surgut. Apparently, the Surgut region of the Ob became the place where this type of artistic metalwork was concentrated, because the vessels were received as presents by the local elite. It is doubtful that such expensive dishware could serve only as a trading equivalent.

In connection with the analysis of imported goods in the space of culture-participants in trade operations, V.P. Darkevich wrote about two groups of goods: mass imported things and precious imported things. In his opinion, things from the first group reflect economic ties, while the things from second group indicate the establishment of international contacts; they are a part of embassy gifts (Darkevich, 1975: 143).

### Conclusions

Our analysis has made it possible to clarify the importance of imported objects from the Bulgar Ulus of the Golden Horde not only as a component of the Golden Horde culture, but also as an indicator of new phenomena in the history of the Western Siberian Middle Ages.

The places of discovery of imported silver dishware in the northern regions of Western Siberia generally coincide with the hypothetical territories of the Ob medieval principalities: Koda (the Severnaya Sosva, Berezovo area), Bardakov (Surgut area), and Kunovat (Kunovat

Basin), as well as some fortified settlements (Lor-Vozh on the coast of the Shuryshkarsky Sor Lake) (Fedorova, 2015: 77). It is possible that the concentration of a large number of silver vessels belonging to approximately the same period in the area of the Saigatino locality indicates the simultaneity of their delivery.

Medieval treasures found in the taiga part of the Ob basin are widely known. According to the composition and method of burial, some of them can be regarded as personal hoards. Such, for example, are the hoards found in 1975 and 1976 at Barsova Gora (Surgut area): they contain metal objects, including imported things, neatly packed in a metal vessel and sprinkled with wood dust. These features indicate the transition of the local society to the stage of development which implies the emergence of a special social layer—the elite, as well as concentration of treasures, possibly received as special gifts, in the hands of its representatives.

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