

V.A. Ivanov

*Bashkir State Pedagogical University,
Oktyabrskoy Revolutsii 3a, Ufa, 450000, Russia
E-mail: ivanov-sanych@inbox.ru*

The Distribution of Bashkir Tribes Before and During their Integration into the Russian State*

The ethnic geography of Bashkiria immediately before and during its absorption by the Russian Empire is a matter of debate, because few relevant written or archaeological sources are available. The only reliable sources are the toponymy and hydronymy of Bashkir historical legends, and genealogies (shezhere). Ethnographers believe that the legends originated at the early stage of feudalism; shezhere, at the time of the absorption of Bashkiria by the empire. Eventually, legends became the only documentation proving Bashkirs' ownership of land. The preserved legends and shezhere, taken together, mention some eighty names of rivers and mountains matching modern toponyms of the Southern Urals and mirroring the ethnic geography of medieval Bashkiria. Our comparative analysis suggests that the boundaries of "Old Bashkiria" passed between the Dem River valley and the western foothills of the Southern Urals, as well as along the eastern foothills of the Southern Urals, from the Miass River in the north to the Sakmar River in the south. During the 15th and 16th centuries, these borders remained relatively stable, shifting mostly southward because of the annexation of territories emptied after Ivan IV had conquered the Kazan Khanate and ousted the Nogais from Southern Urals.

Keywords: *Kazan Khanate, Siberian Khanate, Nogai Horde, folklore, shezhere, toponymy, hydronymy, Bugulma-Belebey Upland.*

Introduction

The subject of the socio-economic and political history of Bashkir tribes, in the period between the dissipation of the Golden Horde and the integration of the Bashkirs into the Russian State, has a quite comprehensive (though rather repetitive) historiography. The studies of the researchers who have addressed this subject consider mainly the socio-political and economic situation of the Bashkirs through the prism of the influence of such factors as the division of the territory of the Bashkir tribes among the

Kazan Khanate, the Siberian Khanate, and the Nogai Horde; and the extension of the socio-political and administrative systems of these states to the Bashkirs.

Such approaches are embodied in two large monographs by Bashkir historians—published almost simultaneously—that cover the history of Bashkortostan from the earliest times to the 16th century.

The authors of one monograph are of opinion that during the period under consideration, the main part of the territory of present-day Bashkortostan was united under the reign of Nogai Aknazar Khan, who established here the "clear principles of administrative division" (Mazhitov, Sultanova, 1994: 321).

According to the authors of the other, "in the second half of the 15th to the first half of the 16th centuries, the Bashkirs were under the sovereignty of three political

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entities. The feudal system, which existed in the Nogai Horde, the Kazan and the Siberian Khanates, was extended to Bashkiria.” (Istoriya..., 1997: 134). The discrepancies, although small, are significant, since the first paper implies preservation by the Bashkirs (albeit in the subordinate form) of their own statehood, which was allegedly in place even before the Mongolian invasion (Mazhitov, Sultanova, 1994: 208); while the second study suggests full dissipation not only of the “Bashkir statehood”, but also of the ethnogeographic formation (named by R.G. Kuzeyev the “Old Bashkiria”) that in his opinion originated in the 10th century, with its center on the Bugulma-Belebey Upland (1974: 435–439, 486).

Such a wide diversity of opinion stems from the fact that historians actually have neither documentary (written) nor physical (archaeological) materials pertaining to the period of the 15th to early 16th century. The absence of written sources is explained by obvious circumstances: the states that absorbed the territory of present-day Bashkortostan, and the tribes that inhabited this, represented rather loose ethnopolitical formations with very amorphous boundaries. Within these boundaries, the territory of present-day Bashkortostan had always been a peripheral region, an object of social exploitation, and a source of *yasak* (tribute in furs). Therefore, the archives, even if they existed in the medieval Kazan or Isker (the capital of the Siberian Khanate) could hardly have preserved any detailed information about the peoples and tribes of our region (except, perhaps, the amount of *yasak* imposed on them). In addition, the circumstances in which Kazan and Isker, along with all their service and administrative buildings, found themselves under the reign of the “White Tsar”, were such that any written documents simply could not be preserved.

As for the archaeological materials of the 15th–16th centuries, their accumulation took place under the influence of both objective and subjective factors.

The first factors involve the establishment of Islam in the Bashkir ethnic culture and, accordingly, eradication of paganism in the burial rite, which entailed leveling of any archaeological features pointing to the social or ethnic identity of the buried. Therefore, excavations of medieval cemeteries are not promising in terms of the ethnocultural history. Excavations of settlements and fortresses of that period are of equally little promise, since where they used to be, villages and towns are now located, whose centuries-old existence has eliminated the last remains of hoary antiquity. The lack of sufficient interest in obtaining empirical data on the said period among modern researchers can be attributed to the difficulties of the second, subjective factor.

At the same time, the source-study situation vis-à-vis the problem under consideration is not as hopeless as might appear at first sight. The historical memory

of the Bashkir people has preserved and brought to the present day a comprehensive body of folklore sources and genealogies (*shezhere*) that, with all ambiguity of their assessments as a historical source, take “pride of place” (R.G. Kuzeyev) in historical schemes. According to Kuzeyev (and the researchers of Bashkir folklore have no objections to this), “heroic motifs in Bashkir folk art (‘Ural-Batyr’, ‘Kuzy-Kurpes and Mayan-Khalu’, ‘Kara Yurga’, ‘Kungar Buga’, ‘Kusyak Biy’, and others) mirror, by means of poetical images, events typical of a medieval nomadic society. These literary monuments provide considerable material, not only for the reconstruction of some Bashkir ethnic historical scenes, but also for characterization of the internal social structure and social life of society” (Kuzeyev, 1974: 37). Kuzeyev assesses Bashkir *shezhere* in a similar way, defining them (with a certain convention) as “genealogical chronicles” (Ibid.: 33).

The present paper deals with information provided by Bashkir legends and *shezhere* that allows an idea to be formed of the spatial-geographical environment that was inhabited by the Bashkir tribes in the period of the creation of these epic poems; and since environment is vital to the process of ethnogenesis, it is essential to get an idea of what the former was.

Toponymy and hydronymy of Bashkir historical legends and *shezhere*

The list of locations involved in the historical geography of the Bashkir tribes during the Middle Ages is quite extensive (Table 1). The easternmost geographical point named in the Bashkir epic is the *Irtys River*, over which Ural-Batyr drove enemies away (the Kongur-Buga epic), and in the upper reaches of which Karabay (“the most respected man in the Bashkir race”) lived before several Bashkir families joined him (the Kuz-Kurpyach epic).

However, it is difficult to suggest where further events of the Kuz-Kurpyach epic unfolded. For example, it mentions the Karataş Mountain and the Kaz Kule Lake as the places of Karabay’s camps. The locations of these geographical features cannot be identified; but, according to note No. 6 to the Kuz-Kurpyach epic, the Karataş Mountain is known in the Abzelilovsky District of Bashkortostan (Bashkirskoye narodnoye tvorchestvo, 1987: 512). In the *Irtys* area, there were nomad camps of Akkubyak, one of the batyrs released by Aldar from the demon’s captivity (Aldar and Zukhra). As follows from the epic context, Akkubyak and Aldar belonged to different tribes.

Among the Trans-Ural rivers, the folkloric texts mention the *Miass River* as the frontier beyond which Sukem-Batyr overtook and defeated the troops of Kusyum-Khan (the Sukem-Batyr kubair).

Table 1. Geographical features mentioned in Bashkir legends

Feature	Legend	Mention in the legend
1	2	3
Iremel Mountain	Kongur-Buga	Tandysa saw the Idel source near the Iremel Mountain
	Aldar and Zukhra	Mountain located two-days' journey from the nomad camps of Aldar near the Yaik River
	The Legend of Mamai-Khan	Birth-place of Musa, the father of Mamai
	Mergen and Mayankhlyu	Assembly point of batyrs raised against Nugai-Khan
Irendyk	Kongur-Buga	Locality to the south of Alatau
	Idukai and Muradym	Possessions of bey who accepted allegiance of the Golden Horde
	Erense-sesen	Pasture grounds proposed by Kazakh khan Abulkhair to Bashkir tarkhan Akmambet for wintering
Sakmar	Akbuzat	One of the rivers which bed was cut through by the sons of Ural-Batyr under his will
	Kara-Yurga	On the banks of Sakmar, hunter Kusyarbai lived. Sakmar was the boundary, after crossing which Maktymkhlyu ceased to be the wife of Ablyai
	Kongur-Buga	Motherland of Tandysa, about which old woman Gyulkhlyu sang to her
	Muiten-Bey	Possessions of Muiten-Bey
Idel (Agidel)	Akbuzat	One of the rivers which bed was cut through by the sons of Ural-Batyr under his will
	Idukai and Muradym	Territories of nomad camps of the Yurmaty and Tabyn Bashkirs One of six rivers flowing from Uraltau ("like an udder having six nipples")
Upper reaches of Agidel	Kara-Yurga	Nomad camps of Masem-Bai
Upper reaches of Ak-Idil, Tyungak-Tau Mountain	Aldar and Zukhra	Place of nomad camps of the "semirodtsy" Bashkirs
South bend of Agidel	Ek-Mergen	Place of summer pasture of old woman Tugyzak-Ebi and her children
Yaik	Akbuzat	One of the rivers which bed was cut through by the sons of Ural-Batyr under his will
	Idukai and Muradym	One of six rivers flowing from Uraltau ("like an udder having six nipples")
	Mergen and Mayankhlyu	Possessions of Nugai-Khan
Near the Yaik sources – thick forest	The Legend of Mamai-Khan	Place of summer pasture of Musa, the father of Mamai
Nugush	Akbuzat	One of the rivers which bed was cut through by the sons of Ural-Batyr under his will
	Idukai and Muradym	Territories of nomad camps of the Yurmaty and Tabyn Bashkirs One of six rivers flowing from Uraltau ("like an udder having six nipples")

Table 1 (continued)

1	2	3
Irtys River	Kongur-Buga	Ural-Batyr drove enemies beyond the Irtys River
	Kuz-Kurpyach	In the upper reaches of the Irtys River, Karabay, the most respected man in the Bashkir race, lived
	Aldar and Zukhra	Nomad camps of Akkubyak, one of the batyrs released by Aldar from the demon's captivity
Ashkadar	Aldar and Zukhra	One of the points in the journey of Aldar and Zukhra from the nomad camp of Kidras to the camps of Aldar
	Mergen and Mayankhylyu	Possessions of Nugai-Khan
Dim	Mergen and Mayankhylyu	Same
	Zayatulyak and Khyukhylyu	Habitation place of Sakmar Khan between the Aslykul Lake and the Dim River
	Aldar and Zukhra	The River from which banks guests came to the feast of Zukhra's father
Aslykul, Aslykul	Zayatulyak and Khyukhylyu	Habitation place of Sakmar Khan between the Aslykul Lake and the Dim River
Karagas Mountain on the southern bank of Lake Aslykul		Mountain where tulpar-horse waited for his master Zayatulyak
Lake Kandra	Aldar and Zukhra	According to Zukhra, her father Kidryas, while wandering over the Karmasan and Chermasan rivers, reached Lake Kandy in the mid-summer
Balkantau Mountain		Motherland of Zayatulyak in his reply to the Water King. Sacred site of the Dem Bashkirs, resting place of Zayatulyak and Khyukhylyu
Zilair River	Kongur-Buga	River on the way of Tandysa who went to search for the cow Kongur-Buga
Mokhak River		Tandysa mentioned it in her reply to the old woman Gyulkhylyu
Alatau Mountain		Mountain to the east and west of the Ural
Kurtash, Ryaz, Kagytash mountains		Located a little to the right (i.e. to the west according to the Turkic coordinate system) of the Alatau ridge
Kyrkty Mountain		To the south of the Alatau ridge
Sakhra Mountain		To the north of the Alatau ridge
Karalyk and Irgiz	Uzak-Tuzak—the last from the clan of Balabashnyaks	Destination point of migration route of the Balabashnyaks (Pechenegs) from the Cis-Azov region to the Ural
Karatash Mountain	Kuz-Kurpyach	In the vicinity of Karabay's camps
Lake Kaz-Kule		Place of summer pasture of Karabay
Territory of the Ufa River mouth, "flowing into Ak-Idil, and downstream the Ak-Idil River on both banks, to the Cholman-Idil mouth. Our camps occupy not only the banks of this river, but also the territory of five-days' journey on either side".	Aldar and Zukhra	Story of Zukhra about the nomad camps of her father Kidryas

Table 1 (end)

1	2	3
Bir River	Aldar and Zukhra	The River from which banks guests came to the feast of Zukhra's father
Lake Achely		Points in the journey of Aldar and Zukhra from the nomad camp of Kidras to the camps of Aldar
Urshak		
Gorkiy Uzryan flowing into Urshak		
Uzryan, Kasmart, Ik rivers	Idukai and Muradym	Rivers flowing from Uraltau ("like an udder having six nipples")
Saelmysh	Muiten-Bey	Possessions of Muiten-Bey
Bishtamak, Kizil, Oisyuk	The Legend of Mamai-Khan	Place of winter pastures of Musa, the father of Mamai
Tanyp River	Eget-Kypsak and Bashkir girl	Place where Eget-Kypsak met the Bashkir girl
Miass River	Sukem-Batyr	Beyond the Miass River, Sukem-Batyr overtook his enemies
Yuraktau, Kuksyatau	Bilal and Dusyan	Mountains at the sight of which an old Bashkir, who lost his sons, grieves
Atash	Erense-sesen	Pasture grounds proposed for wintering

Locations of the Bashkir Trans-Urals are more frequently mentioned in the epic poems. First of all, these are *upper reaches of the Agidel River*, the territory of nomad camps of Masem-Bai (the Kara-Yurga epic), the *Iremel Mountain* near the Agidel sources, which Tandysa saw during her wanderings around the Urals (Kongur-Buga); the same mountain is referred to as the birth-place of Musa, the father of Mamai-Khan (The Legend of Mamai-Khan); as the place located two days' journey from the nomad camps of Aldar near the Yaik River (Aldar and Zukhra); and as the assembly point of batyrs raised by Mergen against Nugai-Khan (Ek-Mergen). In the upper reaches of Agidel, the *Tyungak-Tau Mountain* is mentioned as the place of nomad camps of the "semirodtsy" Bashkirs (Aldar and Zukhra). In the forests near *the Yaik sources*, Musa, the father of Mamai-Khan, held his *yaylyau* ('summer pastures') (The Legend of Mamai-Khan).

The *Irendyk Valley* is the place proposed by Kazakh khan Abulkhair to Bashkir tarkhan Akmambet for wintering (Erense-sesen), as the possession of bey who accepted allegiance of the Golden Horde (Idukai and Muradym), and as the locality passed by Tandysa on her way to Alatau (Kongur-Buga).

The *Sakmar River* is one of the water streams whose bed was cut through in the Ural Mountains by the sons of Ural-Batyr under his will (Ak buzat), the habitat of hunter Kusyarbai, and the boundary, after crossing which Maktymkhylyu ceases to be the wife of Ablyai (Kara-Yurga), the motherland of Tandysa, about which old

woman Gyulkhylyu sang to her (Kongur-Buga), and the possessions of Muiten-Bey (Muiten-Bey).

The *Nugush River* is also one of the water streams whose bed was cut through by the sons of Ural-Batyr (Ak buzat), the territory of nomad camps of the Yurmaty Bashkirs, simply one of the rivers flowing from Uraltau (Idukai and Muradym), etc. (Table 1).

Such toponyms mentioned in Bashkir epic poems as the *Bir River* and *Cholman-Idil (Kama) River*, the *Kandra (Kandry-Kul) Lake* (the Aldar and Zukhra epic) and *Aslykul Lake* (Zayatulyak and Khyukhylyu) allow determination of the western boundary of the ethnos's area. These are territories of Bashkir nomad camps: the Cholman-Idil River and the Kandra Lake meant the boundaries of nomad camps of Kidryas, father of Zukhra; guests came to the wedding of Aldar and Zukhra from the banks of the Bir River; between the Aslykul Lake and the Dim River, nomad camps of legendary Sakmar Khan were located.

Thus, geographical realities captured in Bashkir traditions and legends mark the space lodged in the historical memory of the Bashkir people, the spatial-geographic coordinates of their world-view and world-perception (Fig. 1).

According to the definition given by folklore researchers, the formation of the Bashkir epic took place "from the period of disintegration of the primitive communal system to the origin of capitalist relations in Bashkiria".

The oldest epic legends of the Bashkirs are "Ural-Batyr" and "Ak buzat" kubairs (Ibid.: 15, 17). "Ural-

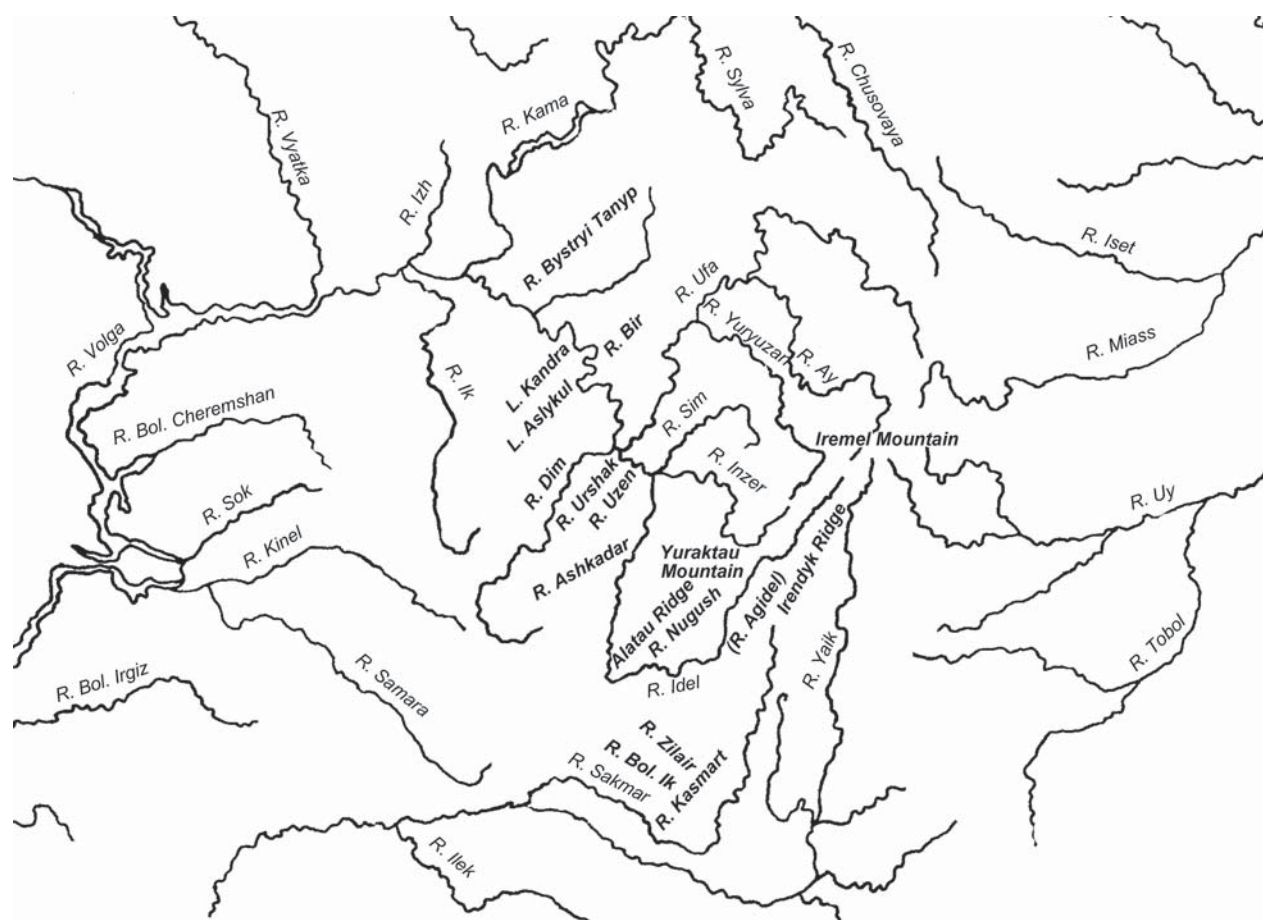


Fig. 1. Map of toponyms and hydronyms of the Southern Urals mentioned in Bashkir traditions and legends (marked in bold italics).

Batyr” does not contain any real toponyms, oronyms, or hydronyms*, while “Ak buzat” includes them: these are the Yaik, Sakmar, and Nugush rivers. However, it is hardly reasonable to doubt that the later Bashkir legends had already taken shape in the period of distribution of ancient Bashkir tribes in the Southern Urals. Consequently, by mapping the geographical realities mentioned in them, we can obtain a map of areas that lay at the heart of the world-perception of the ancient Bashkirs.

Actually, this map fully coincides with the map of the distribution of Bashkir tribes in the 13th–14th centuries reconstructed by Kuzeyev on the basis of historical and ethnographic data (1974: Maps No. 3–10). In real geographic coordinates, these are territories located to the east and northeast of the Bugulma-Belebey Upland, in the western and eastern foothills of the Southern Urals (Fig. 1).

*In fact, the “Ural-Batyr” epic is very difficult to use as a source of the historical ethnography and geography of the Bashkirs: the time of its origin is unknown, and it does not reflect any historical or geographical realities.

Information on the territories of dispersal of Bashkir tribes during their integration into the Russian State is contained in Bashkir shezhere, which were compiled (according to the content of surviving genealogies) just at that time or somewhat later; or in the period when the Bashkir people were trying to save the clan system from internal disintegration and external destruction (Bashkirskiye rodoslovniye, 2002: 28). These also give real toponyms and hydronyms, designating the habitat territories of one tribe or another (Table 2). Plotted on a geographical map, toponyms and hydronyms indicated in shezhere coincide with those mentioned in the Bashkir epic. All geographical points embedded in the historical memory of the Bashkirs and captured in the genealogies (shezhere) are beyond the limits of the Bugulma-Belebey Upland, in the foothills of the Southern Urals or in the steppe areas adjacent in the south (Fig. 2).

First of all, this indicates that the Bugulma-Belebey Upland wasn’t retained in the historical memory of the Bashkirs as the center of “Old Bashkiria” (Kuzeyev, 1974: 438). This is probably because in reality it was not such a center. This is quite natural, since the economic

Table 2. Geographical features mentioned in Bashkir shezhere

Feature	Shezhere	Mention in the shezhere
Zay and Seshma rivers	Yurmaty No. 2	Places of Nogai nomad camps and yurts of Yurmatys' ancestors
Kara-Elga (Chernaya Rechka)		Place where in 1409 the grave of the saint was found
Shadlyk (Shatlyk) River		Place of Yurmaty nomad camps after 1409
Sakmara, Dzhaik (Ural), Idel rivers		Places of Nogai nomad camps
Nugush and Kukush rivers		Upper and lower borders of the former Nogai nomad camps, which were occupied by Yurmaty Bashkirs
Ashkadar and Nugush rivers		The first tyuba of Yurmaty Bashkirs
Tor and Seleuk rivers		The second tyuba of Yurmaty Bashkirs
Turatau, Shakhtau, Kushtau mountains from the Sterli River mouth, upper reaches of Kuganak and Urshak, Asava River		The third tyuba of Yurmaty Bashkirs
Mouth of Urshak and Asava rivers, Yuraktau Mountain, Kratugay Valley, Zigan, upper reaches of Kalaman, Tor, Shineshma		The fourth tyuba of Yurmaty Bashkirs
Sukhailya, Tyuryushlya, Tashlyir rivers	Yurmaty No. 3	Places of Yurmaty nomad camps
Middle reach of the Dzhaik (Ural) River from Sarymsak to Buzsavyl; Kizil, Sakmara, Zilair, Asele, Uskalyk, Sureni, Saelmysh, Menyu, Krivle, Irtyubyak, Sarlak, Mryaushli, Kalmak, Bishazy, Ilimsat, Laimberdy, Tanalyk rivers	Deed of land partition, issued by Ivan the Terrible, shezhere No. 9	Possessions of the Tungours and Usergans
Sarymsak, Kamelik rivers, Lake Dyurtkul		Possessions of the Burdzhans
Lands along the Dzhaik River from Saraichyk to Buzdzhava (Buzsavyl), Sakmara, Asele, Uskalyk, Sureni, Menyu, Irtyubyak, Charlak, Mryaushli, upper reaches of Kalmash, Laimberdy, Tanalyk, Kamyshlau, Dzhim, Uk Mountain, Lake Dyurtkul	Deed of land partition, issued by Ivan the Terrible, shezhere No. 10	Possessions of the Usergans, Kipchaks, and Tamyans
Miach (Miass) River	Iryakty genealogies (northwestern Bashkirs)	Habitation place of Iryakte ancestor
	Ayle genealogy No. 11	Place where Bekatun, Ishtyak's son, has come, and where he lived
Ay River	Same	Place where Yanesh, Babesh, and other Ay people's ancestors lived
Ufa River mouth	Genealogy of the Yumran-Tabynskaya Volost	Habitation place of Duvan-Tabyns, Kichi-Tabyns, and 12 other Tabyn clans
Samara River and its tributary, Tok River		Place of settlement of Tuktar-Bey, the son of Khani Uglan who came from Astrakhan
Chusovaya, Chulman (Kama) rivers, Perm, Osa, Okhansk, Barda, Tulva	Iryakty genealogies (northwestern Bashkirs)	Place of wanderings of Abdal-Bey, ancestor of Iryakty people
Tanyp River		Habitation place of Tazlar Bashkirs
Buy River		Habitation place of Uran Bashkirs
Tyuy, Baiki rivers		Habitation place of Iryakte Bashkirs
Mellya River mouth	Same	Place where Abdal-Bey found free lands for the future settlement

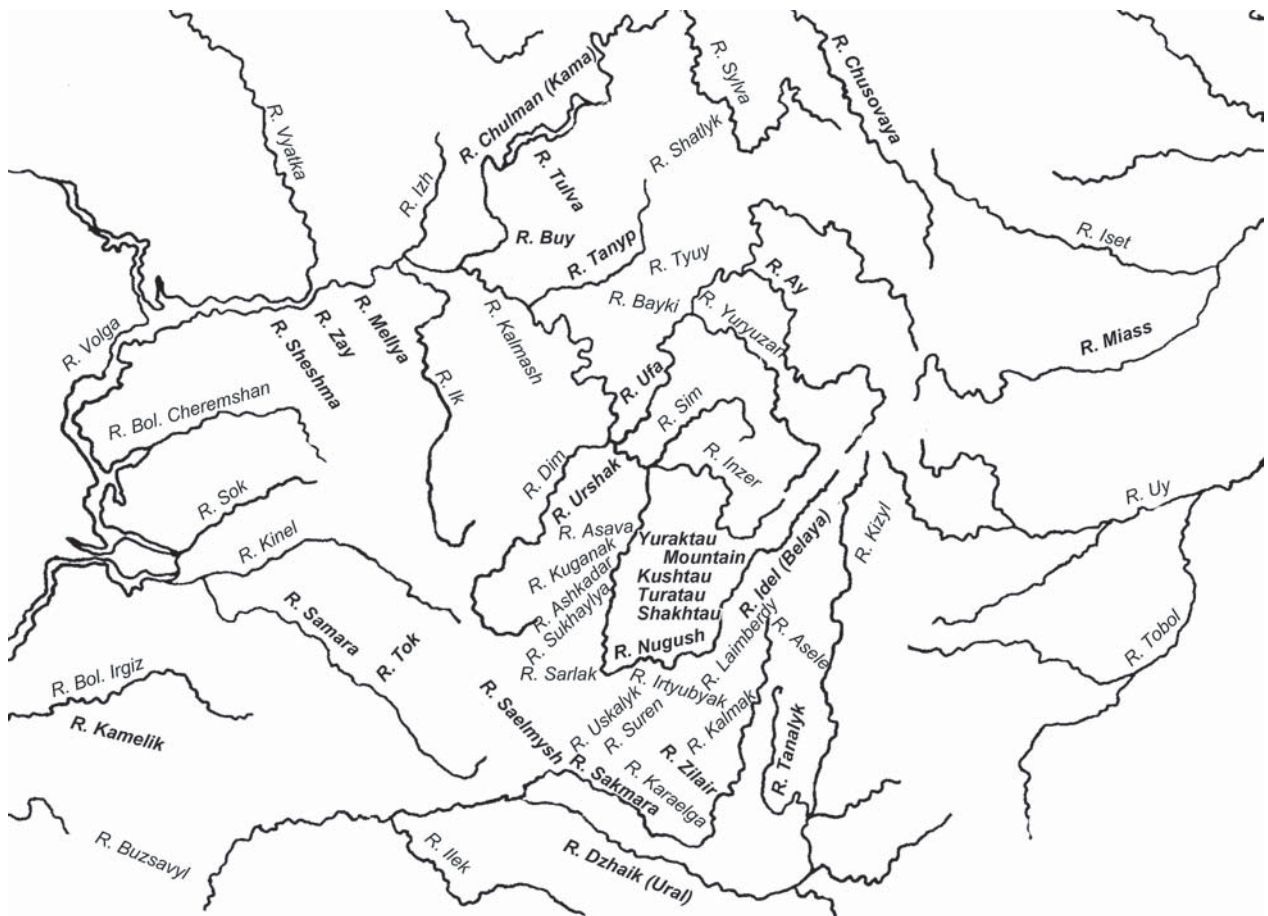


Fig. 2. Map of toponyms and hydronyms mentioned in Bashkir shezhere (marked in bold italics).

and cultural life of medieval Bashkir tribes was based on nomadic cattle breeding. The Bugulma-Belebey Upland, with a form of relief heavily weathered, and dissected by the beds of rivers flowing down from it and located at an elevation of 200–480 m above sea level, was typical forest-steppe even in the middle of the 19th century (Kuzeyev, 1978: 50, fig. 2). It is characterized by vertical differentiation of landscape: the entrenchment depth of the beds of rivers flowing down is 100–150 m, the slopes of syrts are step-like, and their tops are covered by forests (Yaparov, 2005).

Snow cover, the thickness of which is 40–60 cm, is preserved on the slopes of ravines and riverbeds for 160–180 days, till the first days of May. By the middle of August, the herbaceous cover on the upland slopes fades, and the rivers dry up. Therefore, the ancient Bashkirs, even if they used the ecological potential of the Bugulma-Belebey Upland, could have done so only for a very limited time, and went for wintering to the steppe, to the reedy flood-plains of the Ural and Samara rivers, or to the Caspian and Aral steppes.

But their descendants, not later than before the Mongol conquest of Eastern Europe and the origin of the Golden Horde, could have acted in the same way. Again, it was obviously for a good reason that exactly in the 13th–14th centuries (according to Kuzeyev) the distribution territory of the Bashkir tribes was rather limited: from the upstream flow of the Ural River in the east to the lower reaches of the Belaya River and the Dem River in the west; this was the real, and not the mythological “Old Bashkiria”. The formation of its boundaries was undoubtedly influenced by administrative policy of the first Golden Horde khans, which was aimed at clearing East European steppe of the preceding Polovtsian-Kipchak population by transferring the latter to the outskirts of the Steppe (Fedorov-Davydov, 1973: 35–36).

According to the Bashkir shezhere, shortly before and during integration of the Bashkirs into the Russian State, the boundaries of the Bashkir ethnic territory were determined by several ethnopolitical factors. One of them was distribution of Nogai nomad camps up to the mouth of the Kama River (Trepavlov, 2002: 469); another one

was the resettlement of some Bashkir tribes (the Yurmats) in the lands released at the left bank of the Srednyaya Belaya River, after the departure of the Nogais as a result of the seizure of Kazan by the Russians (Bashkirskiy rodoslovniye, 2002: 57).

Conclusions

Information provided by Bashkir historical legends and genealogies (shezhere) allows a number of conclusions to be drawn regarding historical geography of the Bashkir tribes during the Late Middle Ages.

The territory of the Bugulma-Belebey Upland should be excluded from the area of consolidation and ethnic formation of the ancient Bashkirs.

According to the data reflected in Bashkir legends and shezhere, the boundary of “Old Bashkiria” passed between the Dem River valley and the western foothills of the Southern Urals, as well as along the eastern foothills of the Southern Urals from the Miass River in the north to the Sakmar River in the south.

In the 15th to early 16th century, the “Old Bashkiria” territory was actually limited by the valleys of the Southern Urals and the adjacent western and eastern foothills. The extension of its limits by inclusion of southern (steppe) expanses was prevented by Nogai nomad camps, which came up to the Ika River and the lower reaches of the Belaya River in the west; and to the Trans-Ural lakes, the Uy River, and the upper reaches of the Ural and Belaya rivers in the northeast (Trepavlov, 2011: 96–99). Extension to the north and northwest was hampered by the migration of the Kazan-Tatar population who fled from the troops of Ivan IV; and by the end of the 16th century, by the burgeoning military and economic expansion of the Moscow State (construction of the Trans-Kama Line, formation of the ancestral lands of the Stroganovs (Georgy, 1780: 18–20; Donnelly, 1968).

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