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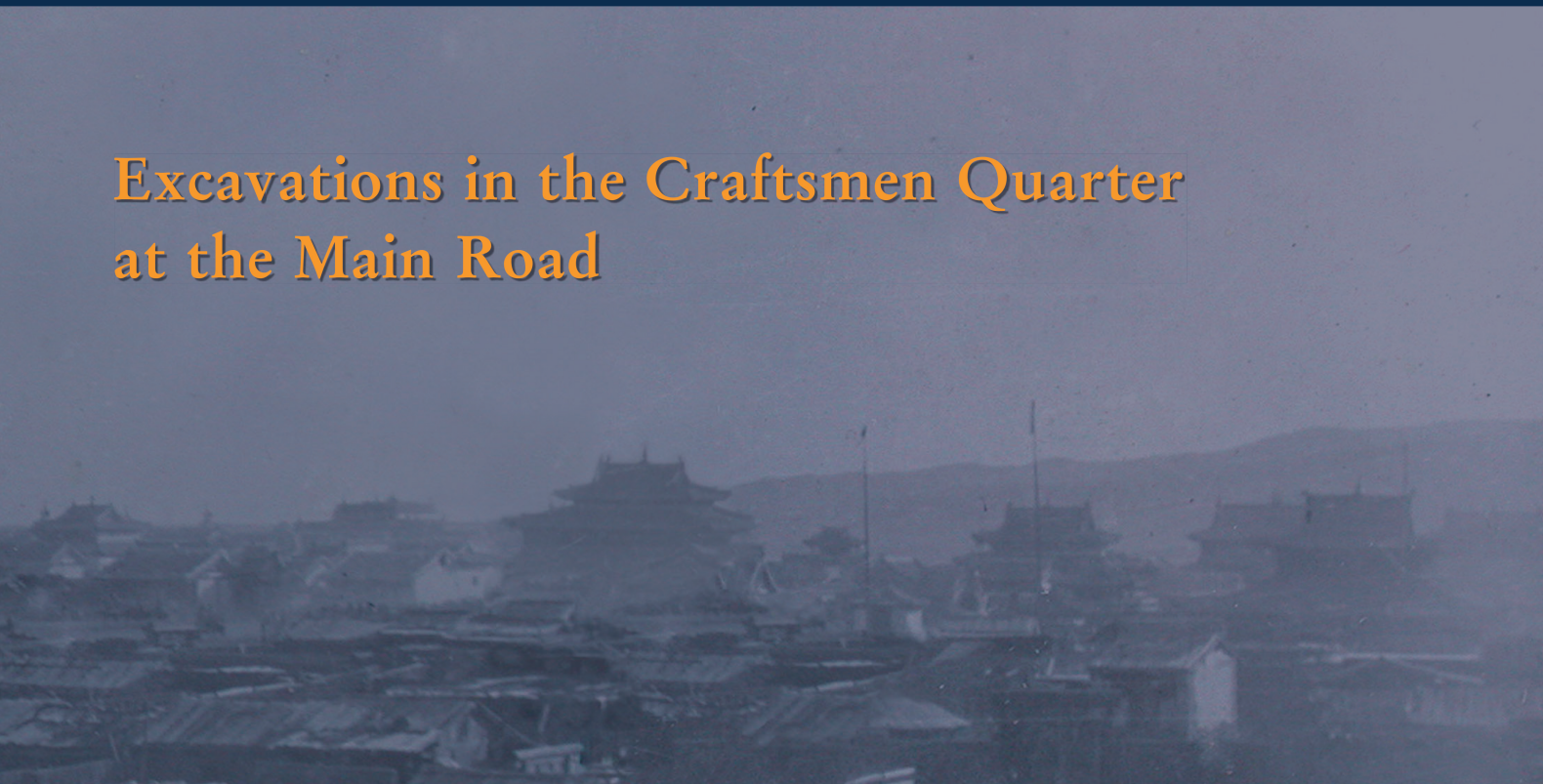
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# MONGOLIAN - GERMAN KARAKORUM EXPEDITION

## VOLUME 1

Excavations in the Craftsmen Quarter  
at the Main Road



edited by  
Jan Bemann, Ulambayar Erdenebat, & Ernst Pohl



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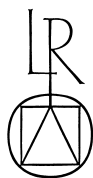
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Dovdoin Bayar, Vladimir E. Voitov

## Excavation in the Islamic Cemetery of Karakorum

Between 1978 and 1980 the Institute of History, MAS, organized an excavation research of a large Islamic cemetery in Karakorum, the capital of the Great Mongolian Empire. The research team was led by Dr. N. Ser-Odzhav, and the archaeologists D. Bayar, V. E. Voitov, D. Tseveendorzh, G. Menes, the anthropologist D. Tümen and the teacher of history from the State Pedagogical Institute Namjil were involved in excavation in different years. It should be noted that several publications about the cemetery and its excavation have already appeared in print (Voitov 1990; 1999; Lkhagvasüren 1995; Shiraishi 2001).

The cemetery has been known to exist since the Mongolian-Russian research expedition to Karakorum in 1948/49. The team members observed numerous uneven, round mounds and made notes on a map of the old city (Kiselev et al. 1965: Fig. 80). The mounds are located outside of the north-west corner of city wall and are clearly visible on the aerial picture of the Karakorum area (Roth et al. 2002: Pl. 1).

20 years later, scientist V. E. Larichev believed these complexes to be the redoubt which protected the ancient city against enemies (Larichev 1968: 168). More detailed exploration occurred between 1978 and 1980, and as a result of this research many mounds were discovered, some of which were surrounded by square soil complexes of a certain structure.

One of these mounds, surrounded by a square earthen wall of 40 m length was chosen for excavation. This structure, which at first seemed to be the remains of a building, is situated about 80 m north of the north-western corner of the city wall. Here there is a certain amount of open space, where there are no remains of stone mounds or any other buildings. According to the surface mapping, the central part was as high as 50 cm, and the surrounding soil wall was about 30–50 cm high.

### THE PROCESS OF EXCAVATION

The excavation started in 1978. Two 2 m wide trenches were dug – 42 m from east to west and 38 m from north to south – dividing the whole mound into four sections which were named I, II, III and IV (Fig. 1). During the excavation many items were found, such as parts of upper and lower roof tiles, end tiles, bricks, porcelain, ceramics and remains of human and animal bones.

At first, only one grave was found in the central part of the complex. The 1978 excavation focussed on the southeastern side of the complex and 19 burials were found and analyzed during that year (Graves 1–19). The eastern side of the complex was almost completely excavated in 1979, and 14 additional burials (Graves 20–33) were found during that year. The excavation continued on the western side of the complex in 1980 and four more burials (Graves 34–37) were excavated. These graves were found in the southern part of the square walled area. Four graves were found in section I and 33 graves found in section IV. According to the results of the excavation, only parts of the burial site were excavated and some more graves still remained under the ground in that area.

### CATALOGUE OF GRAVES

#### Grave 1 (Fig. 2 a–c)

The first grave was found at the intersection of the two trenches running from north to south and from east to west. This grave was bigger than the others, with a better shape and structure. It was also the deepest one 138 cm deep from the upper surface of the soil. The human skeleton was placed in a wooden coffin

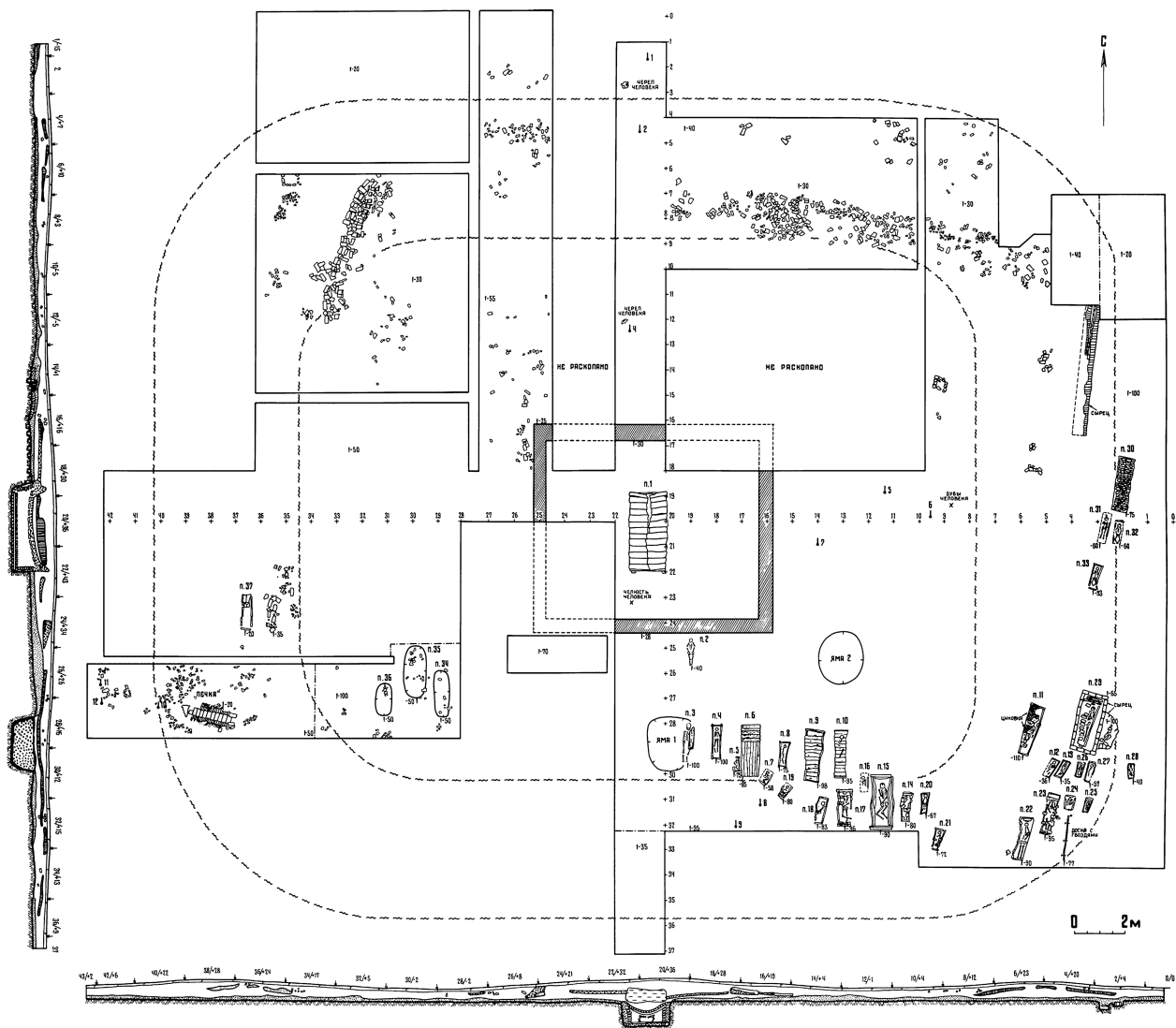


Fig. 1. Karakorum, Islamic cemetery. General plan of the area of excavation.

which was in a square timber frame. The floor of the frame was made of 20 square beams which were laid horizontally and the ends of the wall timbers were crossed. The inside size of the frame was  $2.72 \times 1.07 \times 0.65$  m. The frame was covered by 13 horizontal boards of 4–6 cm thickness. These boards had been broken by the soil pressure except for two boards on the leg side. A remainder of a rag mat, 50 cm in length was found at boards 1, 2, 3 and 4 on the leg side. It should have covered the whole top of the frame. Under these boards we found another wooden covering placed lengthwise. The deceased was interred in a coffin made of thin wooden boards; the bottom and top of the coffin consisted of two wooden boards each.

Both side walls of the coffin were made of one wooden plate. The coffin measured  $2.20 \times 0.60$  m and was about 25–26 cm in height. The body lay in a supine position, north-south oriented, with its head pointed to the west. The deceased was an over 55 years old male, with a height of about 1.64–1.70 m. The arms lay alongside the body. The skeleton was badly damaged. Greenish knitted fabric remains were found nearby and a small part of a grey-black ceramic item was also found near the right leg. Nothing remained from the outer structure of this grave. However, a wall of bricks must have existed around this burial site containing a tomb. Its mud foundation still existed. Some parts of this foundation have brick prints and some parts

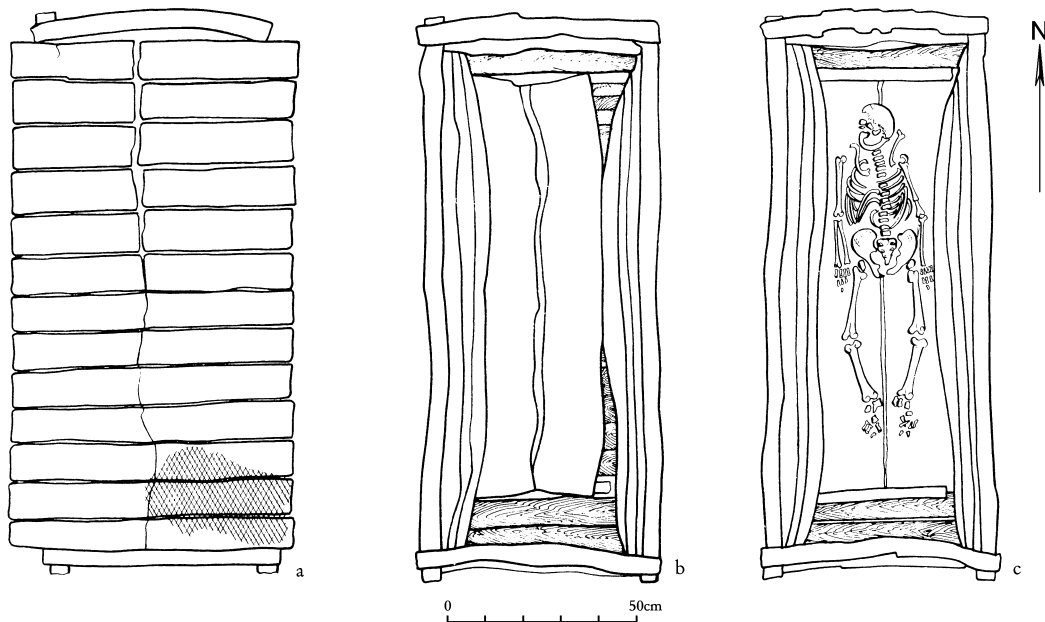


Fig. 2. Karakorum, Islamic cemetery. Grave No. 1. a: Upper wooden cover; b: Inner wooden cover; c: Situation at the level of the skeleton. Scale 1:20.

have brick structure. This structure enclosed a slightly rectangular area of  $8 \times 9$  m around the burial. According to our estimation, the height of the wall was not less than 2 m, the depth was about 0.6 m and the wall previously had roof tiles.

The builders strengthened the brick wall by means of a clay mortar mixture and whitened both sides with lime plaster. A special hole for preparing the lime was found. A special hole for preparing the clay mortar was found at a 4 m distance to the south of the burial site. The size of the hole was  $2.15 \times 1.8 \times 0.5$  m. After finishing the building, the remaining rubbish was put into the hole and covered by some gravel to level the site with the ground.

#### Grave 2 (Fig. 3 a)

A child's grave, oriented north-south was located at a depth of 0.4 m, 0.25 m south of the surrounding wall of the above mentioned burial. The body was buried without a coffin and the position was similar to burial 1. The skeleton was well preserved although the foot bones were missing. The body was approximately 1 m long. An iron pivot was also found, which seemed to have been dropped suddenly.

#### Grave 3 (Fig. 3 b)

The 1 m deep grave, oriented north-south, was located 2.25 m south of grave 2 at the eastern side of the lime mixing pit. The male body, aged approximately 20–25, with Mongoloid appearance and a height of 160 cm, was lying supinely with its head faced to the west. There was a piece of a wooden board in its right hand.

#### Grave 4 (Fig. 3 c)

The 1 m deep grave with north-south orientation was located east of grave 3. Inside a bottomless wooden coffin made of four wooden plates the supine body of a child of 7–8 years was buried. The body was approx. 1 m long, its head pointed west and its left hand was under its back.

#### Grave 5 (Fig. 3 d)

The north-south oriented grave was located 0.55 m east burial 4, and contained no coffin. Only two wooden boards were placed lengthwise. The grave had been decorated by splashing some mud on the bottom and the walls. In the grave, the body of a child of 2

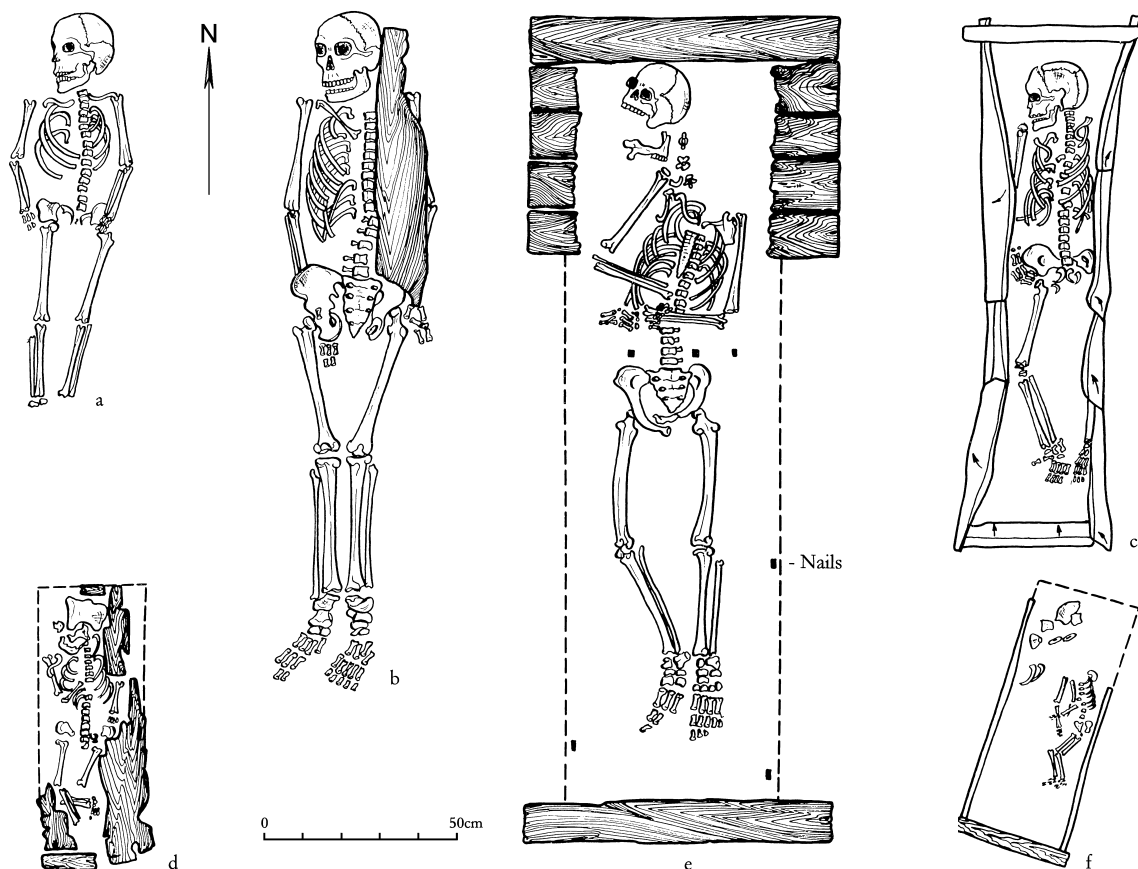


Fig. 3. Karakorum, Islamic cemetery. Graves No. 2 (a), 3 (b), 4 (c), 5 (d), 6 (e) and 7 (f). Scale 1:20.

years, approximately 60–65 cm in height was buried at a depth of 0.75 m. The body was lying on its right side with its head faced to the west.

#### Grave 6 (Fig. 3 e)

The north-south oriented grave was located directly beneath the previous burial 5. The grave was 1.9 m long, 0.6 m wide and 1.2 m deep and the floor was covered with a thin layer of mud. The badly preserved wooden coffin had a lid made of five horizontal wooden boards at the buried person's head. Inside the coffin, the body of a female of Mongoloid appearance was found lying supinely and with her head faced to the west. The arms lay across the stomach.

#### Grave 7 (Fig. 3 f)

The northeast-southwest oriented grave was located at the south-east corner of grave 6. A 65 cm long and 25 cm wide coffin, covered by several horizontal wooden boards, was found at

a depth of 0.58 m. Inside the coffin, the badly preserved body of a baby of approximately 40 cm in length lay on its right side with its face pointed west.

#### Grave 8 (Fig. 4 a)

The north-south oriented grave was located 0.75 m east of grave 6 at a depth of approximately 0.9 m. A body measuring nearly 80 cm was found in a wooden coffin lying supinely and with its face pointed to the west.

#### Grave 9 (Fig 4 b)

The north-south oriented grave was located 0.5 m from grave 8 at a depth of around 1 m. Inside the grave, a coffin of 1.95 m length was uncovered. The coffin had a width of 0.56 m at the top and 0.42 m at the bottom and was covered by 15 horizontal wooden boards. Inside the coffin the body of a man lying supinely was found with its head facing west. The 35–55 year old man was of European-Mongoloid mixed type and measured 160 cm in height.



## Grave 10 (Fig. 5 a)

The north-south oriented grave was located 0.6 m east of burial 9 at a depth of 1.35 m. Inside the grave, a coffin of 1.9 m length with a width of 0.6 m on the top and 0.52 m on the bottom was uncovered. The coffin measured 0.4 m in height and was covered by 14 horizontal wooden boards. Inside the coffin the body of a 20–35 years old female of Mongoloid appearance was found. The body was lying supinely, with its head faced to the west and measured 150 cm in height.

## Grave 11 (Fig. 5 b)

The northeast-southwest positioned grave was located 7.15 m east of grave 10 at a depth of 1.4 m. Inside the grave, a coffin was covered by 13 horizontal boards. On the boards some remains of a knitted grass mat were found. Inside the coffin the body of a 20–35 years old female was lying supinely with its head facing west. The badly preserved skeleton measured 150 cm in height.

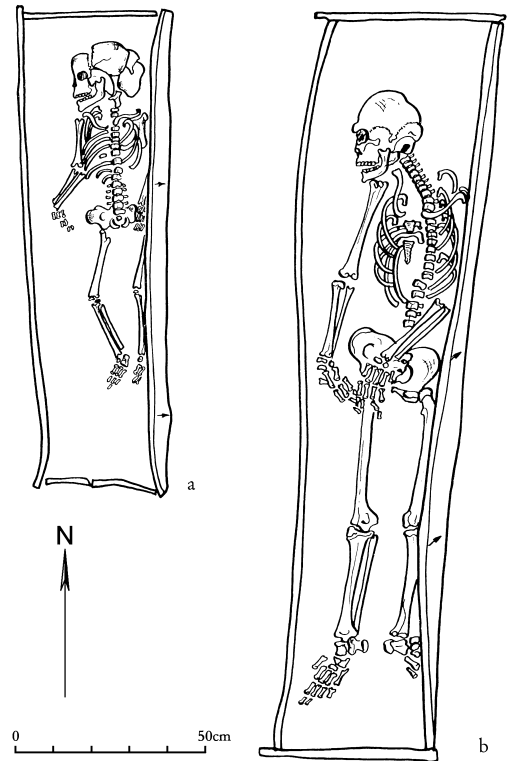
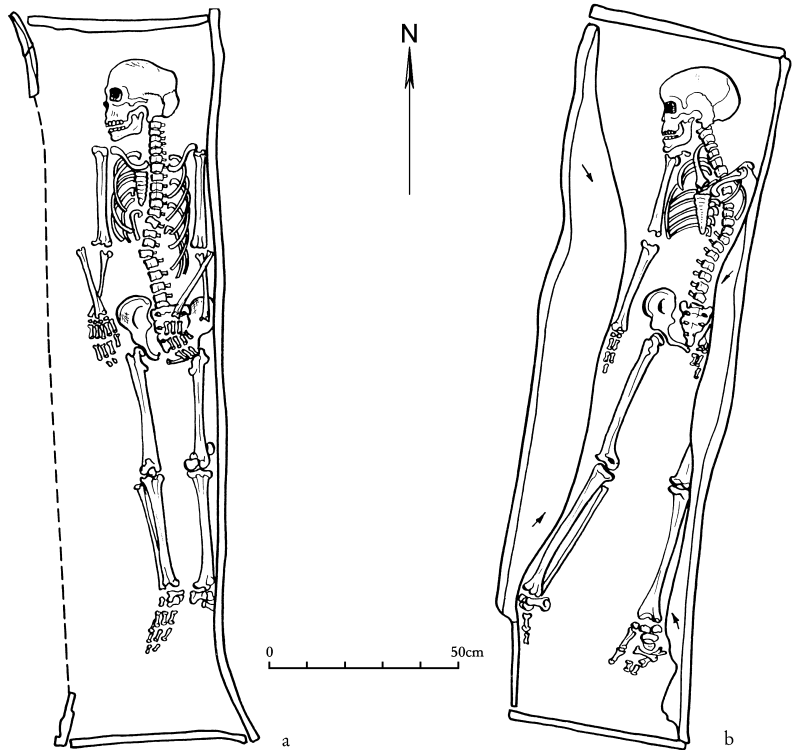


Fig. 4. Karakorum, Islamic cemetery. Graves No. 8 (a) and 9 (b). Scale 1:20.

Fig. 5. Karakorum, Islamic cemetery. Graves No. 10 (a) and 11 (b). Scale 1:20.



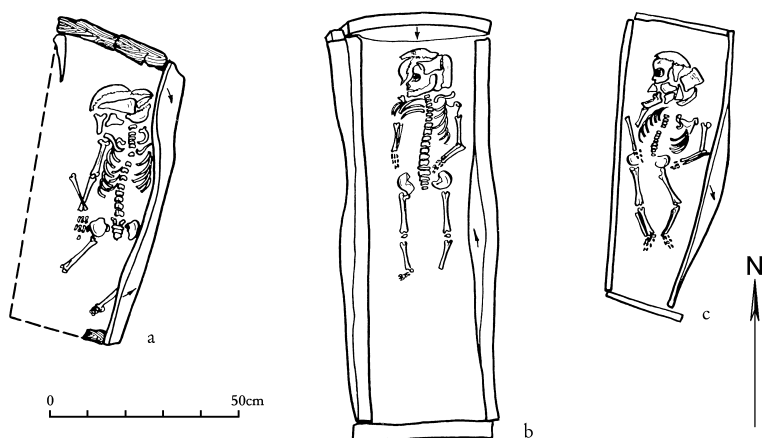


Fig. 6. Karakorum, Islamic cemetery. Graves No 12 (a), 13 (b) and 14 (c). Scale 1:20.

#### Grave 12 (Fig. 6 a)

The northeast-southwest oriented grave was located at a distance of 1 m east of grave 11 at a depth of 0.5 m. Inside the grave, a coffin of around 80 cm length was found of which the eastern and southern side were damaged. The coffin was covered by two wooden boards. The 69 cm long body of a two year old child was buried on the right side of the coffin lying supinely and looking west. While cleaning the soil inside the grave, some coal chips were found.

#### Grave 13 (Fig. 6 b)

The northeast-southwest oriented grave was found directly southeast of grave 12 at a depth of 0.35 m. Inside the grave, a 0.74 m long coffin was covered by two wooden boards. The coffin had a width of 0.3 m on the top and 0.26 m on the bottom. Inside, the body of a new born baby measuring approx. 50 cm was lying supinely with its face to the west.

#### Grave 14 (Fig. 6 c)

The north-south oriented grave was located 2.5 m west of grave 13 at a depth of 1.5 m. Inside the pit a wooden coffin was covered by seven horizontal boards. Inside the coffin, the body of a one year old child, 60 cm in height was lying supinely with its face looking to the west.

#### Grave 15 (Fig. 7 a)

The north-south oriented grave was located 0.25 m from grave 14 at a depth of 1.3 m. The coffin was made from 3 wooden boards on

each side. The upper surface was covered by badly preserved boards. Inside the tomb the body of a 20–35 years old woman of 160 cm height was lying on its right side close to the eastern wall.

#### Grave 16 (Fig. 7 b)

The grave was located parallel to grave 15 on its northwestern side. It contained the body of a new born child. Part of the 43 cm left wall of the coffin, fragments of the skull, some ribs and parts of the left hand remained. The body was oriented to the north and the face looked to the west.

#### Grave 17 (Fig. 7 c)

The north-south oriented grave was located west of burial 15 at a depth of 1.2 m. Inside the grave, a coffin of 1.48 m length was found. The coffin had a width of 0.55 m on its top and 0.48 m on the bottom. Almost nothing was left from the horizontal wooden lid. The body of an approximately 12 year old child, 140 cm in height, was buried here, lying supinely with its head faced to the west. The right leg was placed on the left leg and the right hand lay on the stomach.

#### Grave 18 (Fig. 8 a)

The slightly northeast-southwest positioned grave was located 0.35–0.5 m west of grave 17 at a depth of 1.05 m. Inside the grave, a coffin of 1.1 m length lay on eleven boards. Inside the coffin, the body of an approximately four year old child was lying supinely with its face looking to the west.

Fig. 7. Karakorum, Islamic cemetery. Graves No. 15 (a), 16 (b) and 17 (c). Scale 1:20.

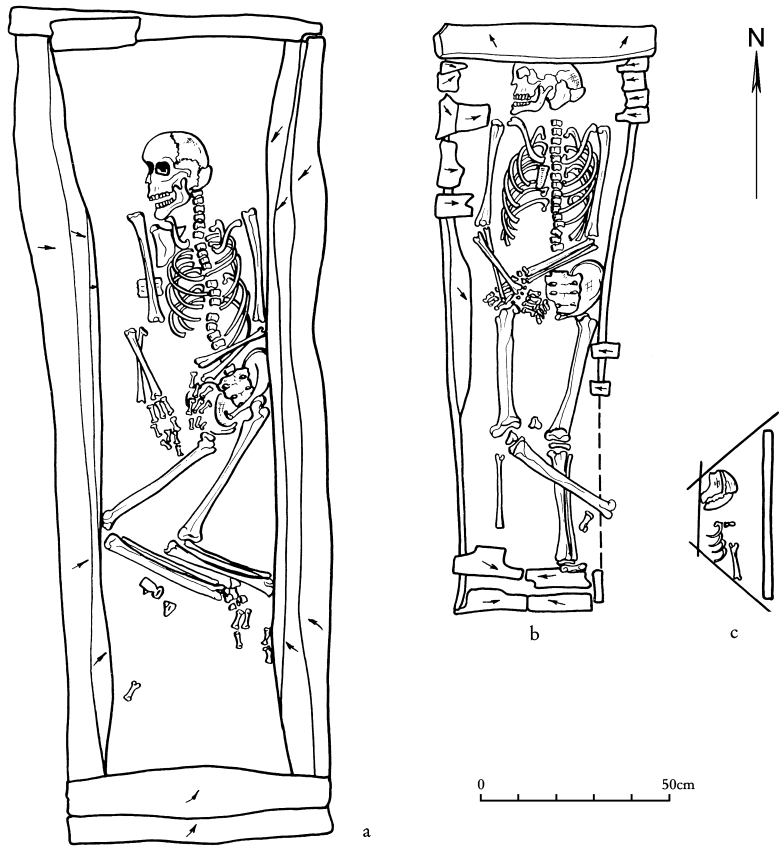
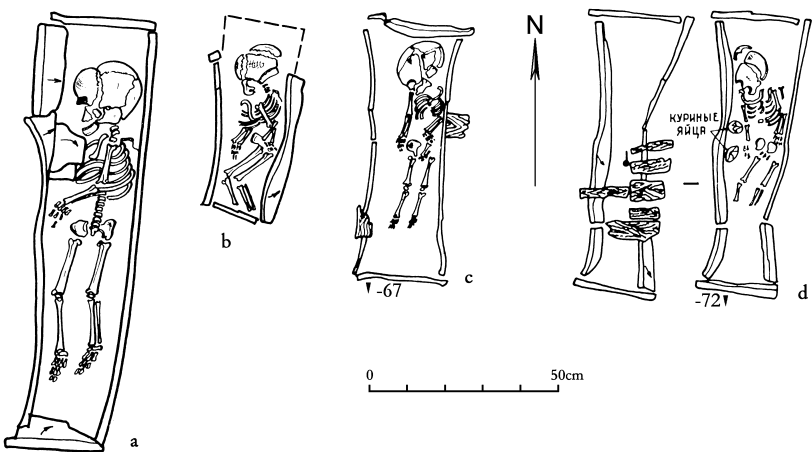


Fig. 8. Karakorum, Islamic cemetery. Graves No. 18 (a), 19 (b), 20 (c) and 21 (d). Scale 1:20.



Grave 19 (Fig. 8 b)

The northeast-southwest oriented grave was located 0.6 m south of grave 8 at a depth of 1 m. Inside the grave, the remains of a coffin of at least 0.46 m length and 0.15 m width were uncovered. The 0.16 m high coffin was covered by four horizontal boards. Its northern front was damaged. It contained the body of a new born child of 50 cm length which had been laid down on its right side with its face looking to the west.

Grave 20 (Fig. 8 c)

The north-south oriented grave was located at a distance of 0.35 m from grave 14 at a depth of 0.82 m. The coffin was 0.8 m long, 0.16 high with a width on its top of 0.38 m and on the bottom of 0.3 m. Nothing remained of the wooden coffin lid. The body of an approximately one year old child was lying supinely with its face looking to the west.

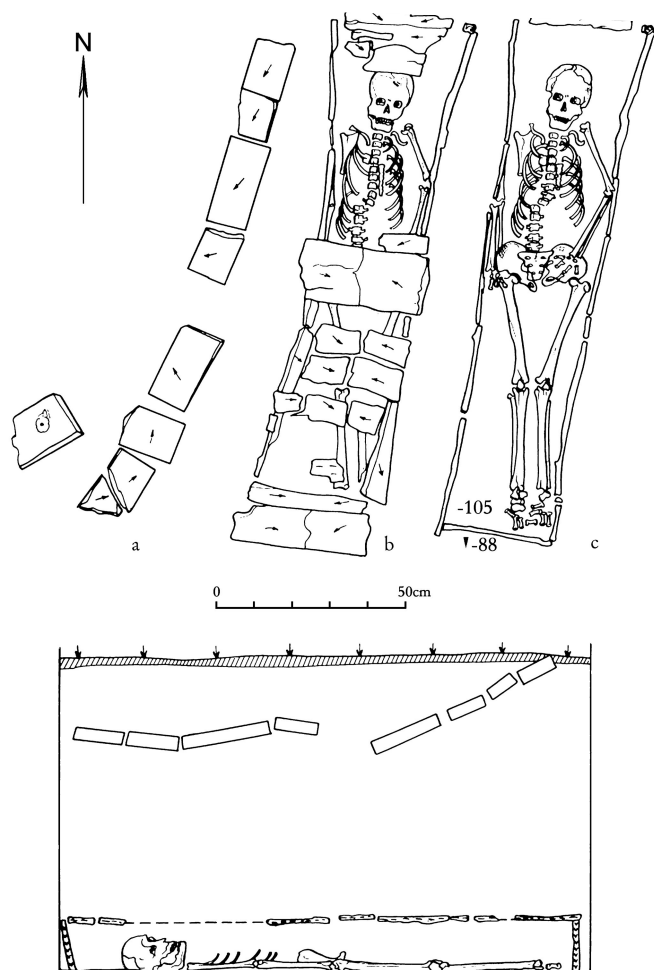


Fig. 9. Karakorum, Islamic cemetery. Grave No. 22. a: Line of bricks; b: Situation with wooden cover; c: Situation at the level of the skeleton; d: Cross section. Scale 1:20.

#### Grave 21 (Fig. 8 d)

The northeast-southwest positioned grave was located 0.7 m southeast from grave 20 at a depth of 0.89 m. The length of the coffin was 0.9 m with a width on its top of 0.3 m and on the bottom of 0.26 m. Almost nothing was left of the coffin lid. The body of an approximately one year old child of 60 cm length was buried lying on its right side, with its legs contracted slightly. Two eggs had been put on the right side of the child.

#### Grave 22 (Fig. 9 a–d)

The northeast-southwest oriented grave was located 3 m to the east of grave 21. The grave was covered by a line of bricks which originally marked the position of the grave at the surface. On the ground of the pit a wooden

coffin of 1.8 m length and 0.45 m width was uncovered. The 17–21 cm high coffin had no bottom, but parts of the lid remained. Inside the coffin the body of a 35–55 years old woman measuring 155 cm was buried lying supinely with its face to the top of the coffin and one hand lying on the body.

#### Grave 23 (Fig. 10 a)

The northeast-southwest oriented grave was located 0.35 m northeast of burial 22 at a depth of 1.2 m. Inside the grave a coffin of 1.65 m length and 0.45 m width was uncovered. Parts of the wooden lid were preserved. Inside the coffin, the body of a 25 years old woman of 160 cm height was laid supinely with both hands resting on the body and the face looking toward the west. A half brick under the head served as a pillow.



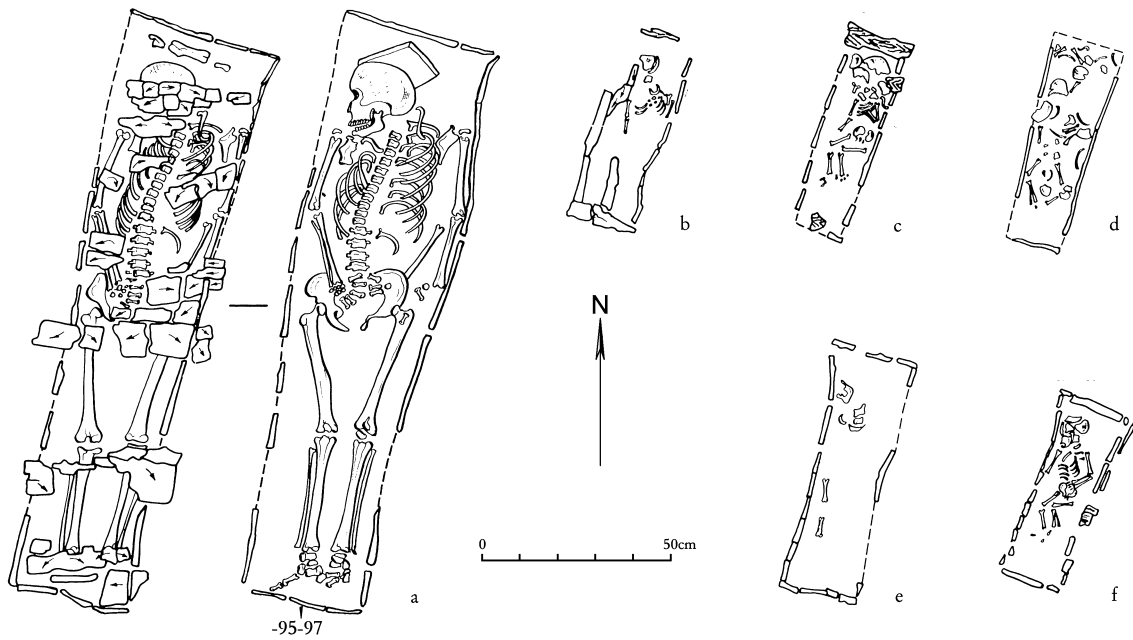


Fig. 10. Karakorum, Islamic cemetery. Graves No. 23 (a), 24 (b), 25 (c), 26 (d), 27 (e) and 28 (f). Scale 1:20.

#### Grave 24 (Fig. 10 b)

The northeast-southwest oriented grave was located 0.25 m east of grave 23 at a depth of 0.85 m. The wooden coffin was 0.65 m long and 0.26 m wide and was badly damaged. It was covered by 2–3 longitudinal wooden boards. Inside the body of a new born baby had been buried, the bones of which were mostly decomposed.

#### Grave 25 (Fig. 10 c)

The northeast-southwest oriented grave was located 0.4 m east of grave 24 at a depth of 0.8 m. It contained a wooden coffin of 0.7 m length and 0.35 m width. It was the grave of a new born baby which had been placed on its right side.

#### Grave 26 (Fig. 10 d)

The northeast-southwest oriented grave was located 0.3 m east of the grave 13 at a depth of 0.55 m. Inside the grave, a 0.7 long and 0.25 wide coffin was uncovered. It contained the body of a new born baby which was looking to the west. Most of the skeleton was decomposed.

#### Grave 27 (Fig. 10 e)

The northeast-southwest oriented grave was located 0.2 m east of grave 26 at a depth of 0.82 m. The wooden coffin had a length of 0.85 m and a width of 0.3 m. The grave contained the body of a child whose bones were so badly decomposed that it was impossible to define the first anatomical position.

#### Grave 28 (Fig. 10 f)

The north-south oriented grave was located 1.8 m east of grave 27 at a depth of 0.6 m. The coffin had a length of 0.63 m and a width of 0.25 m. It contained the body of a child, whose head pointed northeast. The cranium was smashed and other bones were in a very bad condition. But it was clear that the body had been placed on the right side, pointing to the north and its face looking to the west.

#### Grave 29 (Fig. 11–12)

The northeast-southwest oriented grave was located 20–30 cm north of graves 26 and 27. During the cleaning of the surface, brickwork was uncovered in a northeast to southwest direction which originally marked the position of the grave on the surface. Remains of

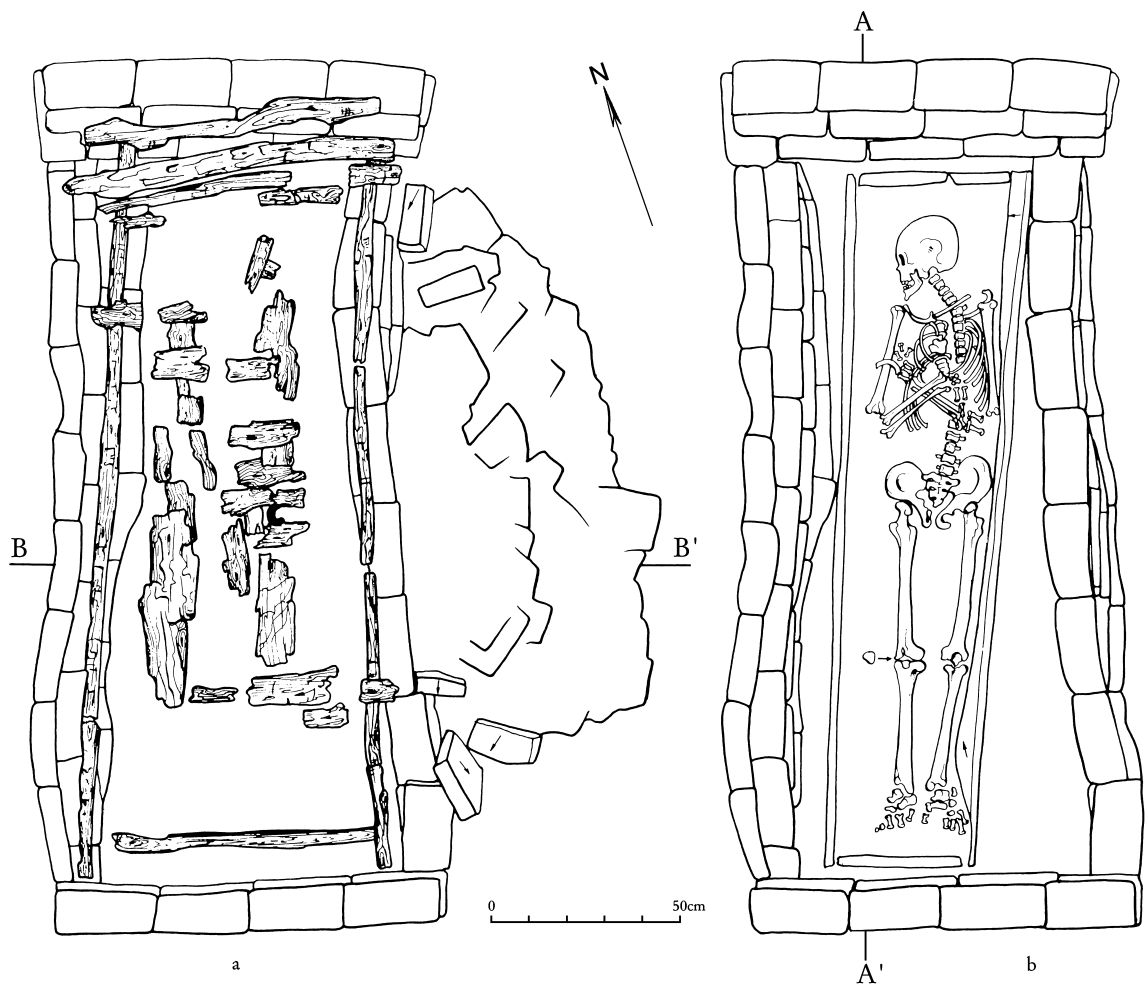


Fig. 11. Karakorum, Islamic cemetery. Grave No.29. a: Situation with wooden cover; b: Situation at the level of the skeleton. Scale 1:20.

a tomb wall, made from mud and bricks were found later. The northern, southern and western walls were in good condition, but the eastern wall had lost its form because of moisture. We found that the northern wall was built from 12 rows of bricks. Horizontal wooden boards were put on the brick wall. The tomb was 2.5 m long, 1 m wide and 0.5 high and was located at a depth of 110–130 cm from the surface. The bottomless coffin was made of wooden boards, 1.85 m long and 0.5 m wide. A male body, 165 cm in height, aged approx. 25–35 was lying supinely with its face looking to the west. Both hands were placed on the chest. The remains of knitted fabrics were also present.

Grave 30 (Fig. 13)

The northeast-southwest oriented grave was located 6.4 m from grave 29 at a depth of 0.76 m. The bottomless coffin was made of 24 wooden boards, which were well preserved. The length of the coffin was 200–225 cm, at the head end 73 cm wide and 23 cm high and 63 cm wide and 18 cm high at the foot end. The body was placed slightly on the right side, in an extended position. Both hands were placed along the body. A horse tooth was found on the right side of the body. The man was of Europoid type. The body was about 165 cm long. A large quantity of coal chips were found in this grave.

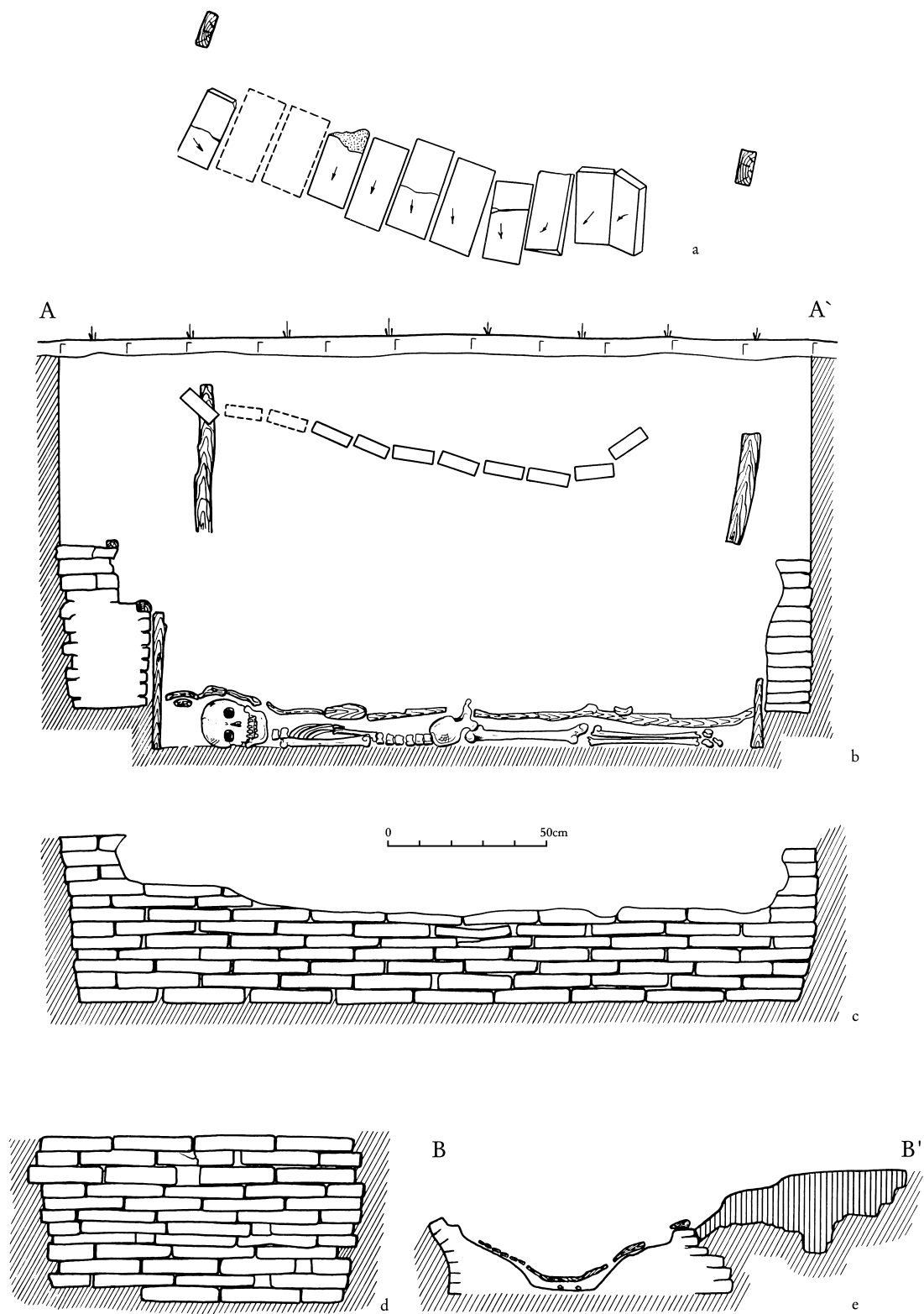


Fig. 12. Karakorum, Islamic cemetery. Grave No. 29. a: Line of bricks; b: Cross section A-A'; c: Western wall of bricks from the chamber; d: Northern wall of bricks from the chamber; e: Cross section B-B'. Scale 1:20.

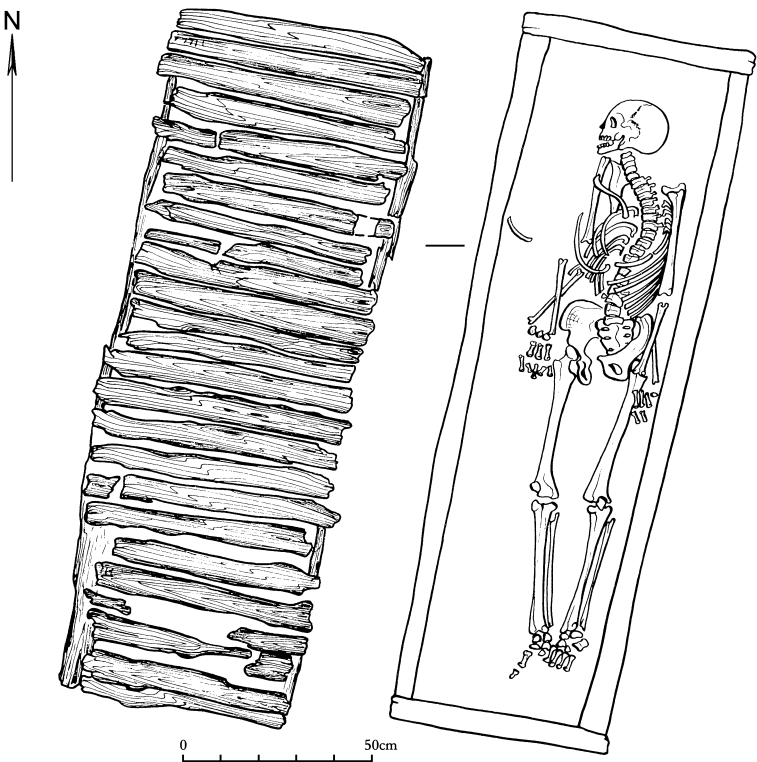


Fig. 13. Karakorum, Islamic cemetery. Grave No. 30. a: Wooden cover; b: Situation at the level of the skeleton. Scale 1:20.

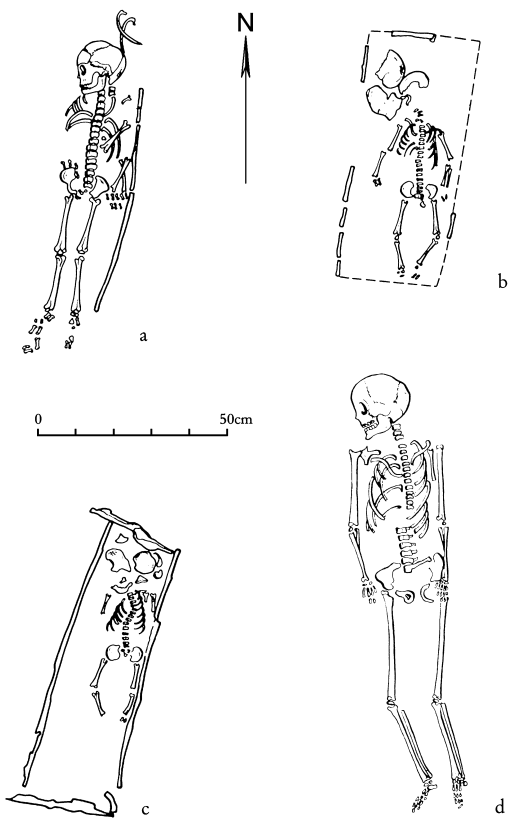


Fig. 14. Karakorum, Islamic cemetery. Graves No. 31 (a), 32 (b), 33 (c) and 34 (d). Scale 1:20.

Grave 31 (Fig.14 a)

The northeast-southwest oriented grave was located 0.6 m south of grave 30 at a depth of 0.85 m. The grave contained a badly preserved coffin. The 1 m long body of a child was lying supinely with its face looking to the west. The cranium had been smashed into many parts.

Grave 32 (Fig. 14 b)

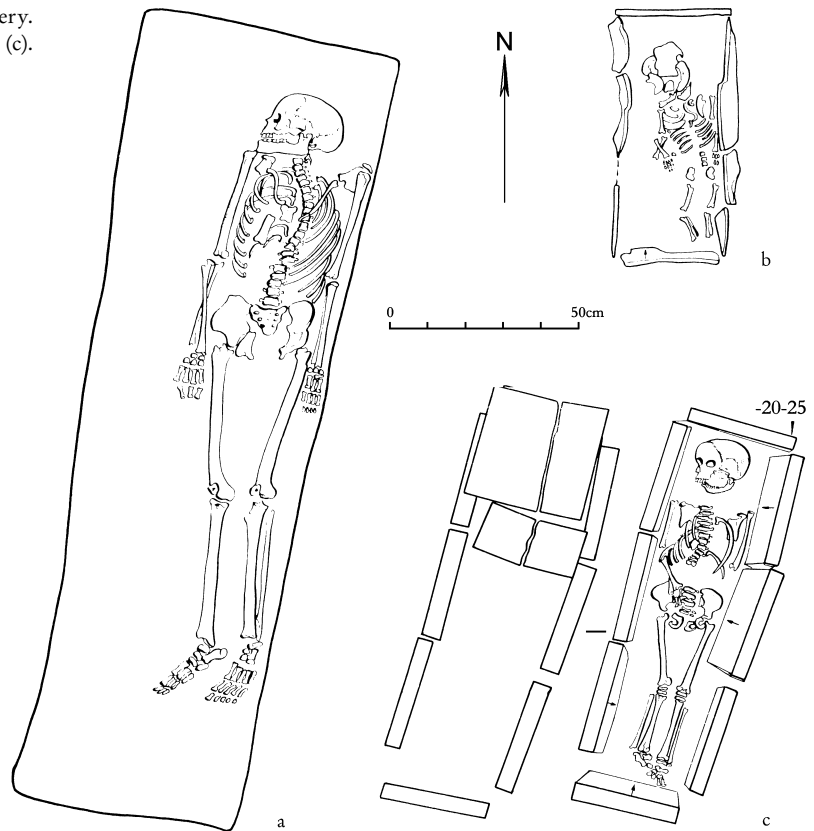
The northeast-southwest oriented grave was located directly east of grave 31 at a depth of 0.74 m. It was the grave of a child and there were almost no remains of the wooden coffin. The cranium bone had also been smashed. The coffin was approximately 85–90 cm long and 30 cm wide.

Grave 33 (Fig. 14 c)

The northeast-southwest oriented grave was located 0.7 m south of grave 31 at a depth of 1.1 m. It contained the body of a child in a wooden coffin 1 m long and approximately 0.35 m wide. Due to the decomposure of the bones, it was impossible to define the body position.



Fig. 15. Karakorum, Islamic cemetery.  
Graves No. 35 (a), 36 (b) and 37 (c).  
Scale 1:20.



#### Grave 34 (Fig. 14 d)

The north-south oriented grave was located 7 m southwest of grave 1 at a depth of 90 cm. It contained the body of a child measuring approx. 122 cm and lying supinely with its face looking west.

#### Grave 35 (Fig. 15 a)

The north-south oriented grave was located 0.6 m northwest of grave 35 at a depth of 1 m. The body had been put in a coffin made of wooden boards, which were preserved badly. The coffin was 2.2 m long and 0.78 m wide. The 170 cm long body was lying supinely with the face looking to the west.

#### Grave 36 (Fig. 15 b)

The north-south oriented grave was found 0.7 m southwest of grave 35. Inside the grave a coffin – 0.77 m long and 0.3 m wide – contained the body of a 55 cm long child. The body was lying supinely.

#### Grave 37 (Fig. 15 c)

The north-south oriented grave was found 5.5 m northwest of grave 36. A tomb of  $1.15 \times 0.36 \times$  approximately 0.3 m was constructed of bricks  $30 \times 30$  cm in size. The northern and southern sides of the tomb were formed by one layer of bricks, the eastern and western side by three layers. Inside the tomb the body of a 4–6 year old child was uncovered which was lying supinely with its face looking to the west. The right hand was placed on the chest.

#### CONSTRUCTION OF THE GRAVES

In total, 37 graves from the cemetery northwest of Karakorum were excavated and studied. 33 of them had wooden coffins, one had a brick coffin and three bodies were buried without coffins. Most of the interred were placed supinely with the head pointing north or northeast and with their arms lying beside their bodies. 20 bodies pointed roughly to the northeast

and the rest (17) pointed exactly towards the north. Some of the corpses lay on their right side with bent knees. The depth of the graves varied from 0.36 to 1.38 m.

Graves 1 and 29 had rather special structures. In the first grave, which was located under the mound in the centre of the cemetery, a wooden chamber was constructed and the body was placed in a wooden coffin with bottom into the tomb. The length of the chamber was 3 m, its width 1.60 m and its height 0.90–0.92 m. The lid and the bottom of the chamber were fashioned of horizontal boards and the capping and top of the coffin were made by two boards which were placed lengthways. The coffin boards were fastened by iron nails. The burial of an elderly man contained some remains of wool knitted fabrics of green colour which were found under his back and right hand. Also, some remains of knitted rag were lying on the capping of the coffin. We also need to note that there was an occurrence of covering the coffin with similar material in grave 11.

When grave 29 was constructed, the interred was buried in a wooden coffin without a floor inside the chambered mud brick tomb. The length of the tomb was 2.5 m, 1 m in width, and half a meter high. On the tomb we found two standing wooden stakes and some brickwork which meant that there was a brick ceiling above the tomb. Both arms of the dead were put on the chest crossing each other. Similarly to the burial one knitted stuff was also found.

All of the graves contained a wooden coffin without floor placed on the ground hole and were covered by horizontal (transversal) wooden boards. There were no other finds in the burials except for two eggs found in grave 21, which distinguishes it from other burials. The half brick, which was used as a pillow in grave 23, and a horse tooth in grave 30 were some exceptions.

Regarding the present condition of the burials, there were no signs of disturbance or robbery. All these interred lay in their original position. Burials with such rituals have never been found before in Mongolia, which makes difficulties in understanding the related period.

To construct brick tomb on the burial, without any artefacts belonging to the dead persons is completely different from burials excavated before in Mongolia, but the rituals of these burials are similar those from Islamic

countries. These people used to breed some birds, but it is strange that we only found eggs in one grave.

### Bricks

Three types of brick were found here:

- Square, greyish bricks  $32 \times 32 \times 5$  cm. They may have been used for the floor of the buildings according to their size and form. Unfortunately, there were not many bricks. One of them consisted of four reconstructed parts. Two pieces of such bricks were found near several bricks in grave 2.
- Long bricks  $29.5 \times 14.5 \times 4.5$  cm. These were well burned, blue coloured bricks, which were used for building walls.
- Bricks with a depression in the middle of them. It was for splitting the bricks without destroying them. We found three types of this sort.

### Roof tiles

- Lower roof tiles: Four kinds of lower roof tiles were found differentiated by size and form of the front decoration. They had some similarity to those from Dyon Terek city in the Russian Federation (Kiselev et al. 1965: 92). These roof tiles were  $28 \text{ cm} \times 20 \text{ cm} \times 1.5\text{--}2 \text{ cm}$ .
- Common edge tiles: They were used to cover the lower roof tiles at their meeting point. Drawings and decorations were put at the front side of the disc of these tiles. They were 27 cm long, 17 cm wide and 1.5–2 cm thick.
- Upper roof tile: These were used at the meeting point of the lower roof tiles and the upper roof tile. Drawings and decorations were put at the very end of these tiles. Every roof tile had a special join to fit the one which followed. The upper roof tile was 2.5 cm long, 12 cm wide and 1.5 cm thick.
- End tiles: Only one kind of end tile was found here separate from the upper roof tiles. These were made individually and during the process a piece of upper roof tile was glued to the end tile to improve it. The diameter of the end tile was 11–12 cm and a pattern of a strange legendary animal was drawn in the 1.5 cm wide frame around the top side. This pattern was similar to the end

tile found in the “cross street house” during the excavation of Karakorum in 1948/1949 (Kiselev et al. 1965: 320).

#### METAL FINDS

- Copper pendant: This is square with rounded corners. The base is wide and the upper part narrow. At the top there is a hole. Inside the pendant there is a single-lined frame in the middle of which there is a picture of a wave which had been made by a sharp tool. The pendant is 3.4 cm long, 3.6 cm wide at the base and 2 cm at the upper side.
- A broken piece of copper jewellery with a drawing decoration. This was made of two strips of entwined copper. It must have been part of a larger piece, as it was broken at both ends.
- A broken piece of an iron nail with a round head. The head is the only part of the nail left, and it is not possible to identify the size of the nail as it was badly kept. The diameter of the head was 1.5 cm.
- Piece of an iron item with a hole in the centre.
- Piece of a cast iron basket with some welding.
- A broken piece of a copper basket with three circle drawings under the upper edge and a flower pattern on the body. There is a wave pattern on the upper edge.
- An iron scythe.
- A broken piece of a cast iron.

#### CERAMICS AND EARTHENWARES

Plenty of broken pieces of several kinds of ceramics and earthenwares were found in porcelain pot sherds and buckets. The majority of these are similar to the remains that were found during the Karakorum excavation. We can specify them as follows:

- A broken thick earthenware bucket with a brown-greenish glaze. The broken part is rather uneven and pinkish because of burning.
- A grey coloured, unglazed smooth-surfaced potsherd.
- A broken slightly glazed, white-grey coloured bowl.

- A porcelain potsherd with a sharp black-blue pattern on a whitish field.
- A sherd of a bowl with a red flower and green leaf pattern on a whitish background
- A base of an earthenware vessel was found near the northeastern trench. It was not a masterpiece and had patterns of straight lines at the lower part of its wall and inner side of the base. It was made from grey mud. The base was probably 15 cm but it was not possible to establish other measurements.

#### CONCLUSION

The results of the excavation and the study of the cities and settlements of the medieval period, show us that cemeteries occur near a settlement. For example, single or group burial grounds were found in the cemetery situated 200–300 m from the “Takhil Us” settlement of the Middle Gobi aimag of Mongolia, which was researched by the Mongolian archaeologist Kh. Perlee in 1951 (Perlee 1961: 94). Graves were oriented to the north and northwest, the bodies put in wooden coffins with their faces looking west, without artefacts and only some knitted fabrics similar to those from Karakorum. Items and possessions were very similar to our findings and the place was described as the handicraft settlement of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries (Perlee 1951: 139).

There are many cemeteries of the Islamic period among the excavations in the countries which border Mongolia. For example such cemeteries were found in Sandack Tereck and Elegest in the Tuva Republic of Russia. The interred were buried similarly, facing the west, were mainly of Europoid type, and researchers believe the “new coming” people lived apart from the local people (Kiselev et al. 1965: 160–61).

Similar burial rituals also occurred in the cities of Bulgaria and the Golden Horde around the Volga river (Efimova 1974: 26), in Kyrgyzstan (Vinnik 1963: 31–32), Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan (Buriakov et al. 1975: 498). The main feature of Islamic burials was to put the deceased facing west without their belongings.

It is very important to study cemeteries near the settlement or city to identify the ethnic and social structure, housekeeping and conditions of the population. If, when comparing these cemeteries, the burying ritual, the position

and the form of coffins are the same, it is understandable that these buried people had a common origin. The ritual character of these burials varies greatly from the Mongol people of that time and is more similar to those of the Islamic people. It is an Islamic ritual called “kybla”, where the dead person faces Mekka, the holy place for all Islamic people (Kyzlasov 1969: 203). In the regions where Islamic religion was widely spread, people were buried with their heads to the north and their faces to the west or direction of “kybla” (Kyzlasov 1969: 160–61).

Islam began to spread in Middle Asia and Kazakhstan from the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, and tradition includes burial without any belongings inside earthen mounds in a stone or brick frame. But the nomadic people of this region joined the Islamic religion later and kept the old ritual of putting some belongings into the grave (Maksimova 1968: 157).

Many graves were found along the city wall of Berkh Sarai or new Sarai. These were not oriented to the north and there were no signs of coffins, but the position of the skeletons was almost the same. It was also observed that the head was directed west and the face was turned also to the west (Mukhamadiev / Fedorov-Davydov 1978: 95).

From ancient books we can find that people who lived in Karakorum in the 13<sup>th</sup> century were from different countries with different lifestyles and religions. It is also said that people who built Karakorum were from different countries. Rashid-ad-Din, the Persian historian, wrote that Ögedei Khan brought Chinese craftsmen to build Karakorum (Rashid ad Din 1960: 40). Another Persian historian, Juveiny, also wrote that Islamic architects built the Karshi Suri palace and other buildings near Karakorum (Juveiny 1989: 399). William of Rubruck, the franciscan friar from Flanders, wrote that in Karakorum there were two main districts where Muslim merchants and Chinese craftsmen lived (Rubruck 1957: 165). Many Muslims served as counsellors, private secretaries and interpreters at the court of Mongolian rulers. There were also some masters from European countries. From these historical writings it is clear that there were many people from different countries and most of them were Islamic and Chinese people. The settlement of a large number of Islamic people in Mongolia is connected to the invasion of the Khorezm state in 13<sup>th</sup> century.

During this period Islamic people came from Turkestan, Sogdia, Iran and Iraq. They were Turkish, Persian and Arabic people. They were not only craftsmen but among them were also a lot of merchants.

Anthropological study of the bones, excavated from the graves that are under study, shows 59.4% or 22 of the dead were children 0 to 13 years of age and the rest were adults (Tümen 1986, 86). It also reveals that their racial types were not all the same, some were Europoid and others Mongoloid or mixed race.

Comparing this result with the materials found from other regions that were culturally and historically related to this region, anthropologists indicated that it is possible these people are of the same origins as the people from the Semirecie area of Kazakhstan, who are of mixed races – Mongoloid and Europoid (Tümen 1986: 95).

According to the construction and structure of the cemetery, we are convinced that it belonged to one clan, probably an Islamic one. All of the graves faced the west. The western side of this cemetery points toward Mekka. Osteal evidence from this cemetery suggests that the newly arrived Islamic people mixed with the local population. By excavating and studying the cemetery, it has become possible to make a comparison of the written material about the lifestyle, population and housekeeping of Karakorum with the real archaeological facts. Our study proves that there were Islamic people who were living, trading and undertaking construction works as their usual way of living. Since the quarters of Islamic people in Karakorum have not been discovered yet, the cemetery is an indication that Islamic people did live and work here, mixed with the local population, and constructed graves according to their religion customs.

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#### Figure credits:

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