

## 7. Archeological and Cultural Resources

This section focuses on the identification and protection of cultural and archeological sites. The protection of such sites is a critical and problematic aspect of further development of the NSR.

The opening of the Arctic to human habitation is closely connected to the development of ancient cultures in Yakutia, cultures which inhabited areas encompassing more than a quarter of the Eurasian polar regions including Taymyr in the west and Chukotka in the east. Several important archeological questions are common to this vast region of northeast Asia: 1) when and along what routes did humans settle the Arctic coastline; 2) when did humans begin moving from northeast Asia to America; 3) what are the origins of the indigenous Arctic peoples (the Yukagir, Chukchi, Koryak, Even, etc.); and 4) how have humans adapted to the extreme conditions of the Arctic? Many aspects of these questions have been studied by V.I. Jokhelson, V.G. Bogoraz, A.P. Okladnikov, Yu.A. Mochanov, S.A. Fedoseeva, I.V. Konstantinov, V.G. Argunov, S.F. Kistenyov, and others.

More than 300 archeological sites have been identified within the polar regions of the Sakha Republic and more are expected to be discovered as research continues. The majority of these sites were discovered and studied by members of the Lena archeological expedition,

led by Yu.A. Mochanov. Most of these sites are temporary (short-term occupation) hunting camps and contain artifacts from more than one culture. As a result, it has been very difficult to identify distinct cultural complexes. Regardless of the difficulties encountered, many of the Arctic sites contain a wealth of information characterizing the different stages of ancient Yakutian cultures, beginning as early as the Paleolithic period.

No essential cultural differences between northern and central Yakutia are visible in the archeological record. Within the entire territory of Sakha-Yakutia, including the polar regions, distinct cultures appeared in succession, one replacing another through time.<sup>34</sup> Yu.A. Mochanov developed the following typology of Yakutian cultures:

Paleolithic cultures

*Diuktai* (from 35,000 B.C.  $\pm 1-5,000$  years to 10,500  $\pm 1-100$  years)

*Sumnagin* (from 10,500  $\pm 100$  years to 6,200  $\pm 100$  years)

Neolithic cultures

*Syalakh* (from 6,200  $\pm 100$  years to 5,200  $\pm 100$  years)

*Belkachi* (from 5,200  $\pm 100$  years to 4,100  $\pm 100$  years)

*Ymyiakh-takh* (from 4,100  $\pm 100$  years to 3,300  $\pm 100$  years).

These are followed by the *Ust Mil'* s culture of the Bronze Age (from 3,300  $\pm 100$  years to 2,400  $\pm 100$  years) and various early Iron Age complexes (from 2,400  $\pm 100$  years to 500  $\pm 100$  years).

Mochanov developed this typology of ancient Yakutia cultures through the analysis of complex, stratified archeological sites and with the cooperation and contributions of geologists, permafrost specialists, paleontologists, and geochronologists.

Analysis of archeological data from these sites shows that the replacement of one culture by another took place not as the result of social, economic, or ecological factors, but was primarily due to the repeated migration of groups from the south and south-west. The new arrivals pushed part of the aboriginal population to areas with less favorable living

<sup>34</sup> [In this connection, see volume 28, no. 4 of *Soviet Anthropology and Archeology* (1990) entitled, "Bridging the Bering Sea: Soviet Archaeological Discoveries in Siberia" edited by Balzer. -Ed.]

conditions and assimilated those who remained. From the interaction between the aboriginal population and the new arrivals, new cultures emerged.

Today there can be no doubt that the sources of ancient American cultures belong to the Diuktai Paleolithic tradition with bifacial tools. First settlement of the New World originated from Yakutia through Chukotka and Alaska along the Bering land bridge.<sup>35</sup> Probably, Clovis culture with bifacial tools originating south of the Canadian glacier is connected with these populations. American colleagues have not raised doubts about the ancient cultural complexes of Alaska originating from the Diuktai culture of Yakutia<sup>36</sup>. As Yu.A. Mochanov considers Diuktai mammoth hunters to be the obvious ancestors of North American Indian populations who had physical anthropological similarity with Mongoloids of Central and Eastern Siberia.

Among the more well-known archeological sites in the Arctic regions of the Sakha Republic, the following should especially be noted:

- The *Yakutskii Tyubelyakh* site (Anabarskii ulus ) was discovered in 1960 by F.F. Ilyin, and I.V. Konstantinov completed excavation in 1976. The site is located on the right bank of the Anabar River, 75 kilometers from its mouth, 18 kilometers above the Yuryung-Khaya settlement. Nearly 900 stone artifacts characterizing the *Sumnagin* culture of the late Paleolithic period (9th-10th millennia B.C.) were found at the site.
- The *Khorbusuonka I* site (Bulunskii ulus ) was discovered in 1967 by famous Sakha archeologist I.V. Konstantinov. It is located on the right bank of the Olenyok River, 230 miles from its mouth. Cultural artifacts were collected from the surface of a 20-23 meter terrace: 1,440 stone objects, one bone arrow head, and 70 ceramic fragments were found. After examining the stone and ceramic inventory, Konstantinov concluded that all three stages of the Neolithic in Yakutia were represented at the site.
- The *Uolba I* site (Bulunskii ulus ) was discovered in 1942 by A.P. Okladnikov. It is located 20 kilometers south-west of Zhigansk settlement, on the left bank of the Lena River, 70 kilometers from its mouth. The site sits at the height of the Lake Uolba

<sup>35</sup>[Ibid.]

<sup>36</sup>Powers, 1973; Haynes, 1978; Hadleigh-West, 1980.

riverine terrace. In 1943 Okladnikov defined two temporally-distinct cultural strata in the site, referring to them as "upper" and "lower". He considered all artifacts from the lower stratum to be of the same age and to date from the middle stage of the Neolithic, from the third millennium B.C. to the new era. V.G. Argunov attributes the findings at the Uolba I site to the Belkachi and Ymyikh-takh cultures of the Neolithic in Yakutia.

- The *Uolba burial ground* (Bulunskii ulus ) was discovered and excavated by A.P. Okladnikov in 1942. The site consists of two burials located near the Uolba I site. Okladnikov considered the burial ground to be more ancient than the Uolba site. The cultural affiliation of the burial site has not yet been determined.
- The multi-strata *Siktya I* site (Bulunskii ulus ) was discovered on the left bank of the Lena River, 450 kilometers from its mouth, in 1943 by Okladnikov. The site is situated on a stone terrace where the old settlement of Siktya used to stand. In the process of excavating 20 square meters, Okladnikov recorded three cultural levels. The first level had remains from the early Iron Age and the second level supposedly dated to the late Bronze Age. The third level, also dating to the Bronze Age, was rich with finds: stone objects, ceramics, copper ingot, and animal bones. In 1973, 1977, and 1979 the Siktya site was studied by the Nizhnelensk detachment of the Lena archeological expedition led by Yu. A. Mochanov. During the excavations on the 296 square meter site, they were able to define the stratigraphy more precisely, revealing seven cultural levels dating from the early Neolithic through the early Iron Age. Siktyal site thus provides a chronology of cultural development in this part of the Arctic. The Siktya I site itself was occupied by humans for 6,000 years.
- The *Ichchilyakh burial* (Bulunskii ulus ) was discovered and excavated by Okladnikov in 1943. It is located one kilometer below the settlement of Govorovo, on the left confluence of Ichchilyakh, the left tributary of the Lena, 429 kilometers from its mouth. A. P. Okladnikov dates this burial to the second half of the second millennium B.C. and refers to it as Bronze Age. S.A. Fedoseeva considers this burial to belong to the Ymyakh-takh culture, dating from the end of the second millennium B.C.

- The *Burulgino site* (Allaikhovskii ulus ) was discovered in 1959 by Z.V. Gogolev and S.A. Fedoseeva, participants in the Yukagir expedition of the Language, Literature and History Institute of the USSR Academy of Sciences, Siberian Department, Yakutia Branch and the Institute of Ethnography, Academy of Sciences, USSR. The site is situated on the left bank of the Indigirka River. The Lena archeological expedition conducted excavations at the site from 1971-1973. Excavations revealed three cultural levels and a rich collection of materials, including objects of stone, bone, ceramic objects, and more than 1,500 northern reindeer and elk bones. S.A. Fedoseeva believes that the Burulgino site is one of two northeast Asian multi-strata sites containing three successively deposited Ymyakh-takh layers and is the only multi-strata site which does not contain artifacts from other cultures.
- The *Berelekh site* (Allaikhovskii ulus ) is located on the left of the upper reaches of the Berelekh River (the left tributary of the Indigirka River, 100 kilometers above Chkalovo). The Lena archeological expedition (led by Mochanov) discovered the site at the location of a well-known "mammoth cemetery" in 1971. Excavations uncovered 127 stone objects, 49 bone objects, 1003 bones of mammoth, bison, and horses; 5 stone pendants, a fragment of mammoth tusk with a depiction of a mammoth on it, and a spear made from mammoth tusk. Radiocarbon dating of the mammoth tusk yielded an age of  $12,240 \pm 60$  years. Analysis of the Berelekh site materials fixes the latest stage of the most northern extent of the Diuktai culture at 13,000-12,500 before present, making this site the northernmost upper Paleolithic site in the world to date.
- The *Rodinka women's burial* (Nizhnekolymsk ulus ) was discovered in 1980 by S.P. Kistenyov. It is located on the right bank of the Panteleikha River (the right tributary of the lower Kolyma) in the center of the Rodinka II site. At the present time this is the northernmost Neolithic burial in the world. The radiocarbon age, from bones obtained by L.D. Sulerzhitskii, is  $3,600 \pm 60$  years old. The inventory from the burial consists of 100 pieces of stoneware and 70 objects made of mammoth tusk, northern reindeer ribs, animal canines, and bird bones. The burial site retained elements from the middle

Neolithic Belkachi culture, around 3,000 B.C. Today it has the status of a state protected site.

- The *Panteleikha I site* (Nizhnekolymsk ulus ) was discovered in 1970 by Yu. A. Mochanov and S.A. Fedoseeva. It is located on the right bank at the mouth of the Panteleikha River, 132 km. from the mouth of the Kolyma, and is not far from the Cherskii airport on a 20 meter eroded terrace. S.P. Kistenyov studied this site from 1977-1978. Artifacts recovered include 1,005 pieces of worked stone and 252 ceramic fragments. Materials representing all of the Neolithic complexes in Yakutia, and the early metals ages (Bronze age and various early Iron Age complexes) were found at this site. It has the status of cultural monument today.

Even a cursory review of the more significant archeological sites of Yakutia's Arctic zone reveals the unique and rich archeological resources of the polar regions. At the same time, it is important to recognize that the Yakutia region has not been studied sufficiently. Future prospects for fruitful research require the extension of the research area, both on the mainland and to the Arctic Ocean islands.

The protection of the cultural heritage of the Arctic is of great importance today. Accelerated development of the mining industry, the increase in Arctic settlements, including those connected with international use of the Northern Sea Route, and the extension of quarry works are all causing the destruction of many archeological sites. There is also reason to be anxious about the state of other sites of the polar region's history and culture: the grave of De-Long, the grave of Pronchishcheva, the pedestal on the northernmost point of Eurasia (77 degrees north latitude), monuments to S. Dezhnyov and the Russian hydrographic expedition, etc. It is necessary to seek methods of improving and protecting their condition and adapting them for the creation of different types of cultural centers. It is also important to consider specific reserves in this plan, the creation of new sites and inclusion of them in Arctic tourism programs. The publication of special brochures, leaflets and lectures would also help attract attention to the region, its main monuments and values.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> [Educational tools should be developed as guides to protection of archeological and cultural sites and materials. -Ed.]

A successful model for international scientific cooperation in archeology and related fields is the work on the history of the Jesup North Pacific expedition. The main tasks for the participants of this expedition were research of the cultures of the indigenous peoples of northeast Asia and northwest America and observation of their interconnection and influence upon one another. Two important aspects of this expedition were the cooperative study of the peoples of two continents and the participation of both American and Russian researchers.

The North Pacific expedition worked out a base of comparative study for Asian and American "ethnoses" and formed ideas about ethnographic spheres. The scientists came to a conclusion about the existence in antiquity of a united complex of cultures which formed simultaneously in the old Worlds of the northeast and northwest. They also worked out a history of the similarities and differences of the Asian and American indigenous peoples. The researchers wrote about the ethnic community of the North Pacific peoples and about the presence of a simple polar culture of numerous ethnoses and about characteristics of the latter.

The Jesup project could be used as a model for developing further international multi-disciplinary collaboration to extend our knowledge about the history and culture of the regions bordering the Northern Sea Route, to answer unsolved questions regarding the prehistory of Arctic peoples, and to identify and protect cultural and archeological resources. We suggest integrating the scientific and cultural potential of the region in keeping with policies of unifying Native peoples of the Arctic in as short a time as possible.