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Volume 1

Pioneer settlements and  
colonization processes  
in the Barents region

Editor Helena Knutsson

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## List of workshop participants 2003

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Alexandr Volokitin

## Some peculiarities of colonization of the European north-east in Mesolithic

In the Mesolithic epoch, small groups of population penetrated to the European North-East. These groups seem to originate from Kama basin (represented by the Kama Mesolith) as well as from the so-called post-swederian industries of Baltic (Pulli industry) and Volga-Oka interflue. It is obvious, that the population formed by these groups did not maintain connection with the core territories of these two cultural communities and existed in the European North-East for a relatively long period.

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In the early Holocene and, probably, in the late Pleistocene, the European North-East (including the basins of Pechora, Vychegda and Mesen' rivers) was quite a peculiar region due to its geographical position as well as natural and climatic conditions. Its peculiarity is manifested in the fact, that the regional sites of these epochs can be easily compared to the cultures, which are well-known outside the region. Despite the archaeological sites of every culture and cultural type are spread over nearly the whole region, the number of these sites is limited. The development of the industries over time is not recorded, single exceptions notwithstanding. There are no evidences about the local origin of these industries.

It seems like the European North-East cannot be included into any cultural area. It can be concluded, that there were no mass and long lasting migrations of population into the region during Mesolithic. The population, which moved to this territory, either did

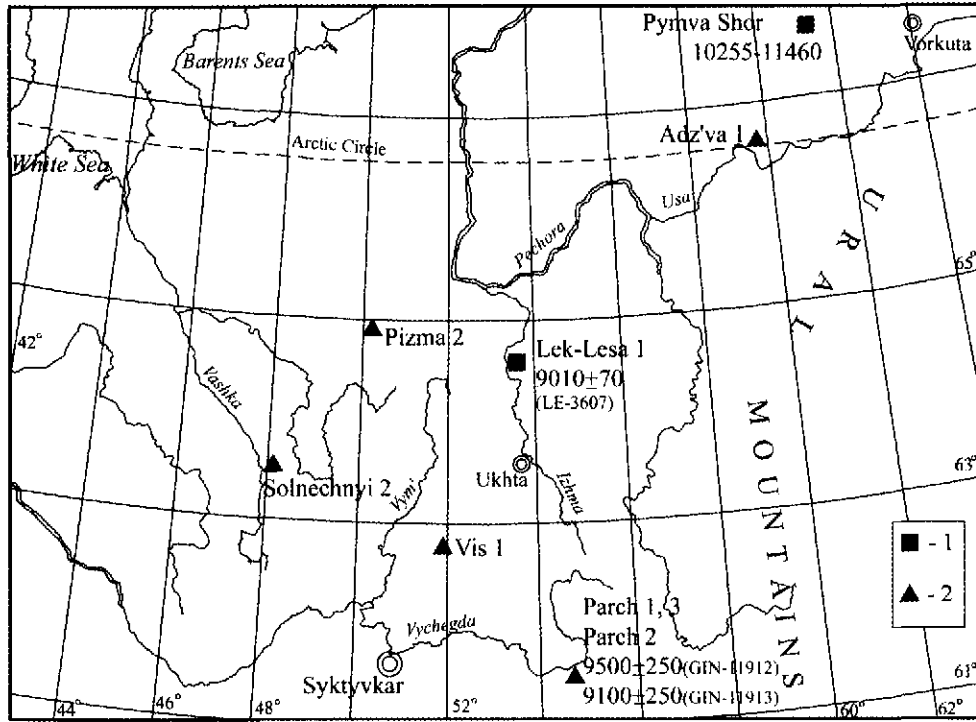
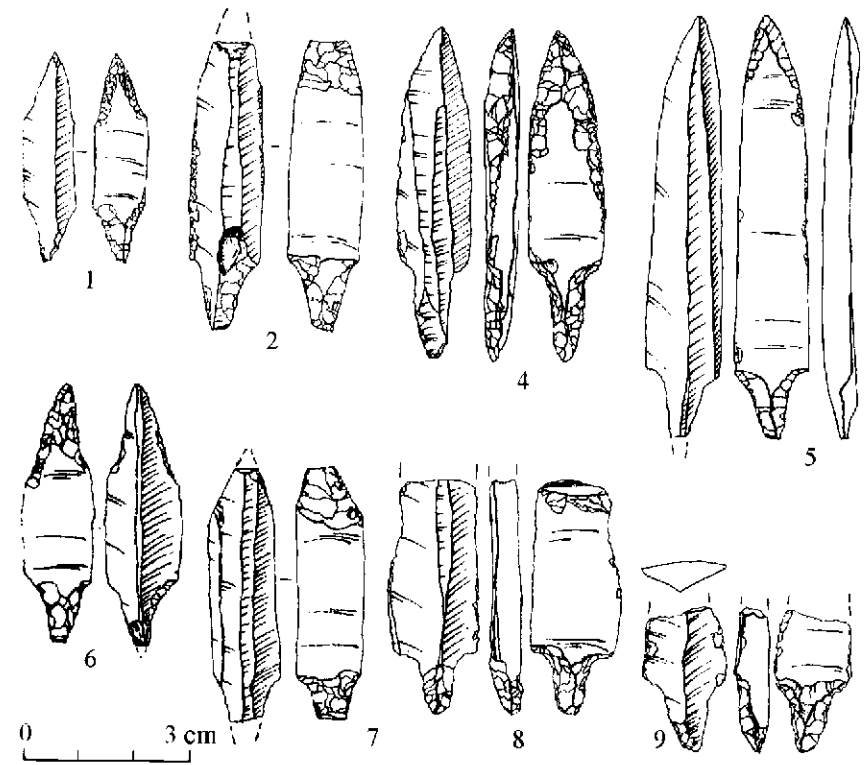


Fig. 1. Distribution and dates of Mesolithic sites in the European North-East. Key: 1 – Sites of Western Tradition; 2 – Carbonically dated sites of Ural Tradition). Dates of Pymva Shor 3 site (Mangerud et al. 1999) are connected to the deposit containing cultural remains and need to be corrected (Pavel Pavlov, pers. com.).

not have any connections to other related tribes or did not live in the region for long enough in order to create such connections. This phenomenon can be compared to the formation of compact Diasporas of modern time, for example Kola Komi (the Komi people of the Kola peninsula), trans-Ural Komi (the Komi of northern Tumen province) or Omsk Komi (the Komi of Omsk province) (Konakov & Kotov 1991).

There are two cultural traditions inside the regional Mesolithic, their technological traits reflecting geographic origin of their creators. These traditions are analytically named the “Sub-Ural tradition” and the “Western Tradition”. The former does not have arrowheads, while the later does have tanged points on blades. The sites of the Sub-Ural tradition are related to the Mesolithic of Kama region represented by the camps of Kama-Zhulanovskaja type (Kozlovski



Tanged points of the initial Parch culture

Fig. 2. Tanged points of the initial Parch culture (1, 4 – Parch 1 site; 2 – Parch 3; 3 – Parch 2; 5 – Adz'va 1; 6 – Pizma 2; 7 – Vis 1; 8 – Solnechnyi 2).

1973: 351). The origin of the Kama Mesolithic, however, is still unknown. Even the evidences, that it is related to the Mesolithic of Middle trans-Ural region, do not help to solve the problem of its origin. The so called Ogurdino stage of the Kama Mesolithic seems not to have any genetic connection to the “pure” Kama Mesolithic. Terminal Paleolithic materials from the Kama region as well as the neighboring territories, as far as they are known by now, are not very informative. It is clear, however, that the origin of the Kama Mesolithic cannot be attributed to them. Some declared similarities between the Kama Mesolithic and the Late Paleolithic Middle Ural culture represented by the camps Talitsky and Bear Cave – Medvezhja Peshera) are far too general (Volokitin 1999).

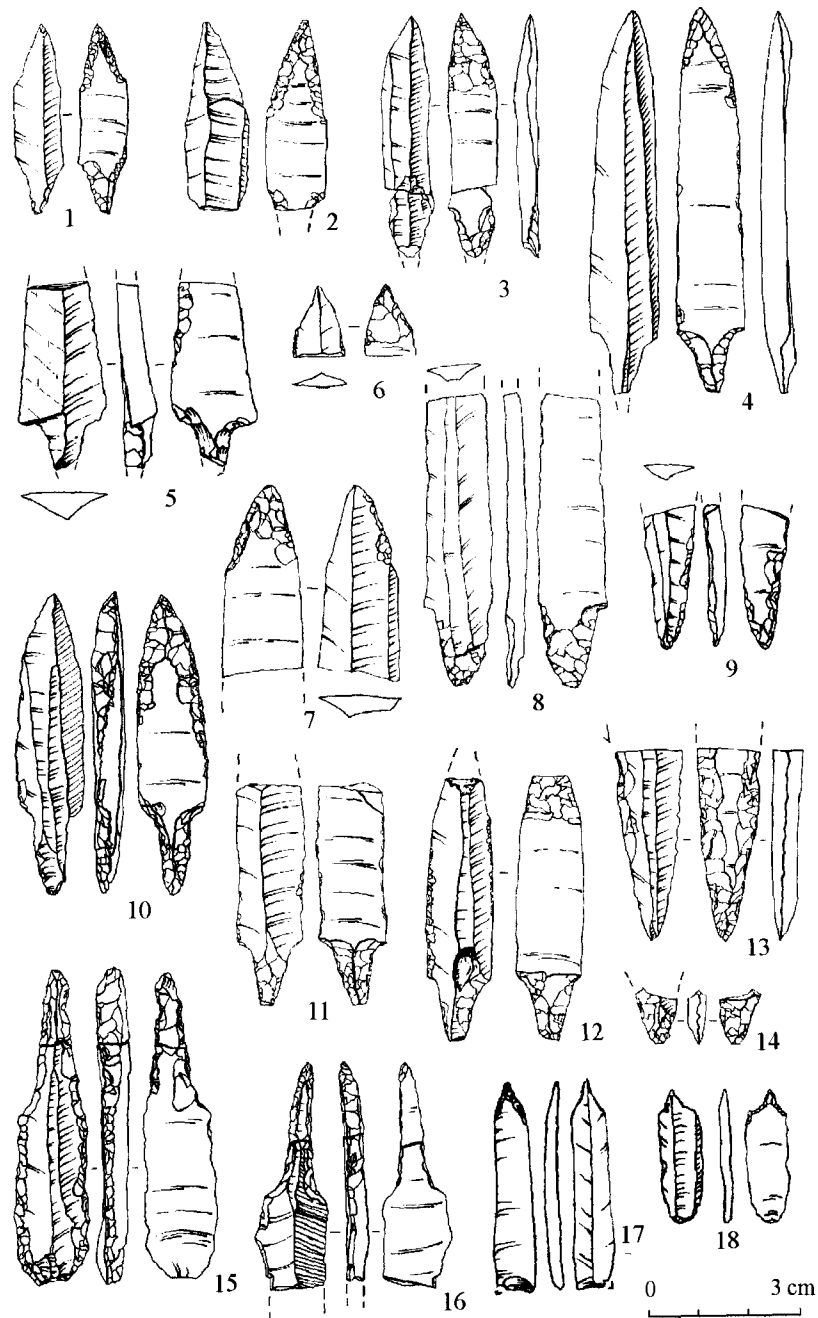


Fig. 3. Points (arrowheads and perforators) from the Parch sites: 1-9, 15-17 – Parch 1; 10, 11, 18 – Parch 2; 12-14 – Parch 3.

The Sub-Ural Mesolithic Tradition of the European North-East includes the sites of Middle-Vychegda culture (described in Burov 1999) as well as the quite peculiar sites Lek-Lesa 1 on Izhma river and Pymva-Shor on Adzva river (Fig. 1). Prismatic blades prevail in the little diversified site collections, which also have high percentage of microblades. The poor toolkit consists of end scrapers, retouched blades, angle burins on broken blades and single points. It is obvious, that the sites of the Sub-Ural Tradition existed for very short time: from the end of 10<sup>th</sup> – beginning of 9<sup>th</sup> millennia ago till the middle of 9<sup>th</sup> millennia ago, that is in the beginning of Boreal.

The origin and sources of formation of the Western Mesolithic tradition (Fig. 1, 2, 3) in the region is much more certain. The artefacts of this tradition have undeniable similarities with Butovo culture. There are analogies to the industries of Sheksna basin (Lotova Gora, Listvinka 3a, b, v and other sites) studied by N. V. Kosorukova (Kosorukova 2000: 91ff). However, the collections from these three groups of sites (Fig. 4) are not identical. There are differences in details of arrowheads, which are quite important element of these industries. There are also differences in content and characteristics of other artefacts. According to the model proposed by A. N. Sorokin, the origin of the Butovo culture is connected to the migrations of groups of ancient population on long distances. These migrations are explained by the need to follow reindeer herds – the main object of hunting among this population. Sorokin believes that formation of this culture represents the following chronological and genetic chain: Ressetino culture – the Pully stage of Kunda culture – Butovo Culture (Sorokin 1999). This model can be applied to the Western tradition of the European North-East as well. Here, however, the final element of the chronological chain is Parch culture. Parch 1 & 2 archaeological sites represent the initial stage of this culture. They are dated by the end of Preboreal – beginning of Boreal periods. The sites Topyd-Nur 5 & 7 on Pechora River represent the late stage of the culture. It is quite probable, that the main part of the materials of Vis 1 peatbog (wetland site) as well as Vis 1 dryland site connected to this peatbog (Burov 1973: 130ff) also belong to this tradition. These materials as well as the Topyd-Nur sites are dated by the end of Boreal-beginning of Atlantic period.

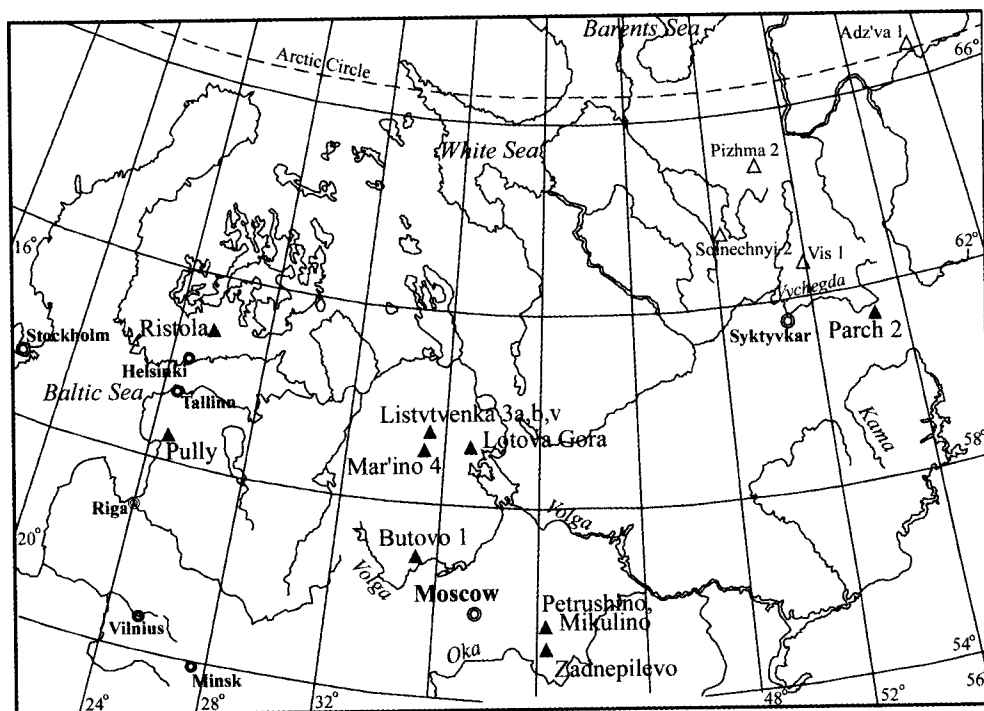


Fig. 4. Location and dates of sites belonging to the Western Tradition of European North-East, Pully industry, Butovo culture and Mologa-Sheksna interfluvium. Dates: Parch 2 – 9500 ± 250 (GIN-11912), 9100 ± 250 (GIN-11913); Listvtvenka 3a – 9090 ± 60 (GIN-6578); Butovo 1 – 9310 ± 110 (GIN-5441); Pully – 9675 ± 115 (Oa-176), 9600 ± 120 (Oa-245), 9300 ± 75 (Oa-175), 9285 ± 120 (Ta-284), 9350 ± 60 (Oa-949) – all uncalibrated (BP). Sources: Takala 2003: 684; Zhilin 2003: 688; Kosorukova 1998: 165.

The origin of the first two chronological groups of Mesolithic sites in Mologa – Sheksna interfluvium (the ones of Mar'ino 4 and the sites of the Lotova Gora type) could be explained in the similar way, that is by penetration of small groups of population. However, such researchers as N. V. Kosorukova (Kosorukova 2000: 75) insist on the “indiscrete development” of Mesolithic industries in this region. N. V. Kosorukova refers to views of M. G. Zhilin as the base of her hypothesis and M. G. Zhilin indeed supports this point of view (Zhilin, this volume).

The researches of Mar'ino 4 Mesolithic camp are of especial importance here. This small site has clear Swederian traits in its collection: Swederian cores and Swederian points (Kosorukova 1995).

Kosorukova and Zhilin consider this fact as evidence, that Swederian population took part in the creation of later Lotova Gora industry as well as Pully and Butovo industries. However, I have another view on this problem. There are reasons to believe, that there are no Swederian elements in the mentioned industries and that there is no relation between Swederian points and the so-called post-swederian ones.

There is no doubt that Butovo culture is the most researched among the mentioned industries (Sorokin 1990; Koltsov & Zhilin 1999). It existed during the whole Mesolithic epoch, from Preboreal till the initial Atlantic period. It should be noted, that this culture occupies a huge territory from the east to the west and from the west to the south. The distance between the related sites of Vychegda and of Sheksna rivers does not differ significantly from the distances inside the area of the Butovo culture itself. It is quite easy to conclude, that such a huge territory signifies a high degree of mobility of the population. Therefore it is possible, that the sites belonging to the late stage of the western tradition of European North-East Mesolithic reflect the penetration of groups of Butovo population to the region rather than development of Parch culture.

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