

Foreword

This monograph was originally published in Yakutsk in 2002 as *Arkheologiya, paleolit Severo-Vostochnoi Azii, vnetropicheskaya prarodina chelovechestva i drevneishie etapy zaseleniya chelovekom Ameriki* with the subtitle *Tr. Prilenskoi arkheologicheskoi ekspeditsii. Doklad dlya Mezhdunarodnogo Severnogo arkheologicheskogo kongressa* [Work of the Prilensk Archaeological Expedition. Report for the International Northern Archaeology Congress]. Khanty-Mansiisk, 9–14 September 2002. This translation by Richard Bland of the University of Oregon is very slightly abridged from the original. Both the authors and the editorial board of Archaeology Press felt that the original contained a few statements that are only of interest to Russian archaeologists, so the authors decided to eliminate them.

Mochanov and Fedoseeva have worked on the archaeology and prehistory of northeast Siberia for nearly 40 years and have published many outstanding articles and monographs. The Diuktai culture is probably the concept that is best known to Americanists because of its similarity to Alaskan remains. While this concept is widely accepted, some of their research has elicited considerable controversy. Indeed, the most controversial is their interpretation of the lithic assemblages at the Diring Yuriak site on the Lena River in Siberia. These assemblages with their early dates have highlighted a problem faced by prehistoric archaeologists the world over: how do you reconcile the archaeological remains you have uncovered with the dates provided you by specialists in the hard sciences ?

Mochanov and Fedoseeva have never been content to accept the ruling theory of the day without examining alternatives. This decision is very much what this monograph is all about. What would you as an archaeologist do when dates and geological models indicate an antiquity of your artifact assemblage of several million years, and both the attributes of the artifacts themselves and the assemblage content do not contradict such a date ?

What the authors have chosen to do is accept the early dates and place their crude tool assemblage in a model of a northern origin of humanity rather than adhere to the ruling theory of the day, the out-of-Africa model of human origins. This decision has not been taken lightly by their colleagues and has led to criticism of both the dates and claims that their artifactual remains are geofacts. This criticism is acknowledged by the authors in this monograph.

Robert Ackerman, Maureen Carlson, and myself have all been to the Diring Yuriak site and observed the excavations and the context of the artifacts. We have observed both the flaking stations with their anvils surrounded by refutable flakes and crude stone tools. This assemblage is cultural and was not re-deposited.

Mochanov and Fedoseeva go beyond the Diring material and present surprising new evidence of Middle Paleolithic lithic industries in far northeastern Siberia, and of Late Paleolithic remains already known from their previous publications.

Archaeology Press is pleased to make this monograph available in English.

Roy L. Carlson