

## I. The New Stone and Bronze Ages

Archaeological sites of Yakutia became widely known to the scientific world. When A.P. Okladnikov had published the results of works of the Lena Historical and Archaeological Expedition and Yu. A. Mochanov and S.A. Fedoseyeva had discovered and investigated the multi-layer(ed) sites with distinct stratigraphy on the Aldan river. All this took place in the forties-sixties of the current century. Since then, with the problem of origin and formation of the ancient cultures of Yakutia remain the central ones in the class of problems of the Siberian archaeology. Of the paramount to understand its sense in the light of new discoveries are. For (A.N. Alexeyev) the aspects of the investigated theme connected with such problems as the ethnogenesis of the people of Yakutia, the sources of their original cultures, study of certain stages of formation of some traditions of the material culture of the aboriginal ethnoses on the basis of cultures, that existed in Yakutia during the Stone and Bronze Ages, seem to be those of no less topical interest.

The historiographical review given in this publication is the first synthesis on the history of study of the archaeological sites of the Neolithic and Bronze Epochs. For the first time, taking into consideration the new archaeological materials obtained A.N. Alexeyev during the last two decades, as the results of investigations of his predecessors, in the work the reconstruction of the ancient cultures of Yakutia those of the New Stone and Bronze Ages is given. In a new way the problem of peopling of the examined region by Turks, Evenks, Evens and Yakuts is solved, and quite different than formerly variants and chronology of such peopling are proposed.

The history of study of the archaeological sites of the Neolithic and Bronze Epochs of Yakutia can be divided into two stages. Each of these stages is characterized by a large scale of systematic investigations, carried out at a high level of professionalism and theoretical comprehension of the archaeological material.

*The first stage:* the 17th century - the 1940s. The earliest evidence on the material culture of the peoples of Yakutia was left in the XVII, century by the Russian military and industrial people. In conformity with “the mandates”, got from military leaders, the expeditions of land-passengers, being on the routes, had to clear up “what kind of people lived on the banks of those rivers and on the tops of the hills, what kind of activities those people preferred, what natural resources were at their disposal and what benefit the Russians could derive from the last”. Of course, the “reports” of such land-passengers were the ones of great importance, but it must be noted here, that they lack any orderly description of the way of life, economy and occupation of the population of the new places. These “records” give rather scanty information on the material culture. For this reason, the informative opportunities of the sources are extremely limited.

In the XVIII-XIX centuries, the Government and Academy of Sciences of Russia, being guided by the needs of home and foreign policy, organized several scientific expeditions for study of the geography and natural resources of North-East Siberia. With their activities special archaeological investigation of the territory of Yakutia began. It was connected, first of all, with works of S. Andreyev and G.A. Sarychev. From the second half of the XIX century such investigations were successfully continued by the political exiles, deported to the examined region as a long-term place of residence: V.G. Bogoraz, V.I. Jochelson, N.A. Gekker, N.A. Vitashevsky, M.P. Ovchinnikov, V.M. Ionov.

After the establishment of Soviet power in Yukutia, the most fruitful works in archaeology of the our republic were carried out by the local scientists and regional ethnographers: S.I. Bolo, M.I. Kovynin, G.V. Ksenofontov, N.V. K'akshto, I.D. Novgorodov, E.D. Strelov.

At the first stage of investigations, the archaeological materials were being accumulated very slowly. It can be explained by the qualitative level of archaeological work, the absence of regular expeditions, shortage of the professional archaeologists. On the whole, the archaeological work of this period was confined to occasional collections of "the odd things" and information about some ancient sites. The interests of unnumerous archaeologists were concentrated on resolving of the problem of the Yakuts. Sites of the earlier epochs were not studied at all.

*The second stage:* from the 1940s to the present time. For this period of investigation of ancient cultures of Yakutia creation of regular archaeological expeditions by the scientific research institutes is a distinctive feature. The first of such specially organized archaeological expeditions conducted its inverstigation of the examined territory from 1940 to 1946. It was the Lena Historical and Archaeological Expedition under the leadership of A.P. Okladnikov. Then, the purposeful archaeological search was continued by the Vilyui and Cis-Lena Archaeological Expeditions of the Yakut Scientific Center of the Siberian Division of the Russian Academy of Sciences (under the leadership of S. A. Fedoseyeva and Yu. A. Mochanov respectively). From the end of the 1960s, gradually extending the scale and thematics of investigation, the Historical and Archaeological Expedition of the Yakut State University began its activities (under the leadership of N.D. Arkhipov, till the 1974 and then - of A.N. Alexeyev). From 1973 the Archaeological and Ethnographical Expedition of the Yakut State University (under the leadership of A. I. Gogolev) joined in a study of the ancient history of the examined territory.

The archaeological excavations of A. P. Okladnikov, carried out in 1940-1946, have found their reflection in numerous publications of the latter. Among them - «The History of the Yakut Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Yakutia Before Its Joining to the Russian State», published in 1955. A. P. Okladnikov not only described the articles of the material culture, dated from the Stone Age and up to the Middle Ages, but also tried to correlate them with certain eth-

noses: Yukagirs, Yakuts, Tunguses. His publications exerted considerable influence on the subsequent works, concerning the ancient history of Yakutia. A great contribution into this sphere of knowledge has been made by S.A. Fedoseyeva and Yu. A. Mochanov. They have not only accumulated a great number of new finds but also discovered a series of multi-layer(ed) sites and created on this basis a detailed and really well-founded division into periods of the archaeological cultures, recognized by them on the examined territory. All this led to a perfectly new level of archaeological knowledge in principle, allowing to make the regional and interregional correlation schemes more surely.

Discovery on the Aldan river and then in other regions of Yakutia of a series of the unique multi-layer(ed) sites, where the main cultural layers contained the paleolithic, mesolithic and neolithic complexes, promoted priority of study of the ancient epochs of the Stone Age over study of the later ones.

On the whole, the second stage of study of the New Stone and Bronze Ages of Yakutia is characterized by regularity of field-work and operative publication of the results of investigations. Systematic works are carried out by the same archaeological expeditions, to a certain extent specialized in concrete scientific themes. By their efforts a large-scale field-work has been carried out, considerable part of the territory of Yakutia has been subjected to an archaeological investigation, varied archaeological material has been collected and a fund of sources has been repeatedly increased. The more effective and perfect methods of excavations of the archaeological sites are used, and investigation of the latter is the complex one, with drawing in some methods of natural sciences. This stage of archaeological study of Yakutia differs from the first one by productivity in respect of theory too. On the basis of new finds, a series of new conclusions has been made, some of the old points of view have been revised and the fresh ideas have been proposed. At this stage, summarizing works of A.P. Okladnikov, Yu.A. Mochanov, I.V. Konstantinov, S.A. Fedoseyeva and others as well as works of Cis-Lena Archaeological Expedition and the Historical and Archaeological Expedition of the Yakut State University came out. Fruitful archaeological study of the region promoted the appearance of the systematized series of manuals of archaeology (A.N. Alexeyev, N.M. Cherosov, 1990; A.N. Alexeyev, A.I. Golubev, I. Ye. Zykov, 1991; A.I. Gogolev, 1978, 1980, 1983, 1986) and the popular scientific book on the ancient history of Yakutia (N.D. Arkhipov, F.G. Safronov, 1992).

*The Syalakh Culture of the IV(th) millennium B.C.* For the first time, an early neolithic site was discovered in Yakutia in 1928 by N. K'akshto on the Aldan river. Later on several sites of the kind were excavated by A.P. Okladnikov, during works of the Lena Historical and Archaeological Expedition in 1940 - 1946. As the further investigations have demonstrated, A.P. Okladnikov was right relating the sites to the Early Neolithic. However, all of them contained cultural remains of different epochs in a mixed state. For this reason, recognition

of the early neolithic artifacts, with the exception of those, made of ceramics, was highly problematic. Only the discovery by the Cis-Lena Archaeological Expedition, in the Aldan Basin, of a series of multi-layer(ed) sites that contained the early neolithic inventory in the precise stratigraphical conditions (Bel'kachi, Sumnagin I) allowed Yu.A. Mochanov (1969) to determine the peculiarity of the Early Neolithic of Yakutia and to give theoretical reasons for existence of a special early neolithic culture, called by him «the Syalakh Culture». The Alexeyev study of the materials of the Early Neolithic of Yakutia allows him to consider the Yu.A. Mochanov's recognition of the special archaeological culture of this period to be quite well-substantiated.

At the multi-layer(ed) sites of Yakutia, those containing cultural horizons of the Early Neolithic Epoch, 14 radiocarbon dates have been fixed. They are in accord with one another. The age of the Syalakh Culture, based on the absolute dates, ranges from  $6200 \pm 100$  to  $5200 \pm 100$  years B.C. (Yu.A. Mochanov, S.A. Fedoseyeva, 1975, 1983).

Sites of the Syalakh Culture have been discovered on the Aldan, Amga, Anabar, Indigirka, Kolyma, Lena, Maya, Olenyok, Olyokma, Vilyui and Yana rivers. At present, in Yakutia, over 110 sites of this culture are known. Ten of them are those with precise stratigraphy and the early neolithic inventory fixed *in situ*: Bel'kachi I, Sumnagin I, Bilir I, Ust'-Mil' I (Aldan); Tensik II, Kurung II, Bol'shaya K'uske, Ust'-Tokko I (Olyokma); Tumul (the Upper Vilyui); Sikt'akh I (the Lower Lena). Besides, on the rock drawings of Yakutia, petroglyphs of the Early Neolithic Age have been recognized (A.P. Okladnikov, A.I. Mazin, 1976, 1979; N.N. Kochmar, 1992). At the early stage of its existence, the Syalakh Culture which combined a series of elements of the Sumnagin One spread over the territory of Yakutia and, probably, Chukotka and Taimyr.

At the sites of the Syalakh Culture, for the first time, serial types of polished stone artifacts and burnt pottery appear. The most significant feature of this culture ceramics with woven net-prints on outside surface is. At the early stage, it was ornamented by modelled bolsters - the feature making such ceramics quite different from that of the Isakov and Serov Cultures of the Cis-Baikal area having the same prints of woven net on the outside surface of pottery. The petrographical analysis of the ceramics from Layers VII and VI of the I Bel'kachi site shows that the ceramic paste was made mainly of clay, sand and chamotte (65-60 %, 25-20 % and 15-20 % respectively).

Among stone inventory of the sites of the Syalakh Culture, the willow-leaved (lanceolate) arrow-heads, double-edged knives and scrapers of the subrectangular and oval shapes as well as polished crescent knives and rectangular adzes are the main types of tools. To those wide-spread burins with variety of angles insets, perforators and end-scrapers made of blades refer. Polished adzes with a step (the one taking shape), faceted (polyhedral) burins with corelike

shafts, multiblade side burins on flakes, arrow-heads made of blades are also met. Among bone tools harpoon points denticulated on one side are recognized.

The Syalakh Complex differ from the synchronous one of the Cis-Baikal area by the absence of wedge-shaped cores in the Early Neolithic of Yakutia. Such cores have been fixed only in redeposited layers of the Sumnagin II Site and are, possibly of the earlier age (V.A.Kashin, 1970). Study of the multi-layer(ed) sites, containing a the mixed state cultural remains of all stages of the New Stone and Bronze Ages witnesses that in this time wedge-shaped cores are completely obsolescent.

*The Bel'kachi Culture of the III millennium B.C.* In the end of the IV millennium B.C., the Syalakh early neolithic culture of Yakutia was superseded by the Bel'kachi Culture of the Middle Neolithic. The latter culture assumed the name of the first multi-layer(ed) site of Yakutia - Bel'kachi I, discovered in 1964 by Yu.A. Mochanov on the Aldan river. The bearers of this culture are considered to be those that once upon a time came here from the Trans-Baikal area and the Upper Amur. In the III millennium B.C., the Bel'kachi Culture, which combined a series of autochthonous elements occupied the whole area of the former Syalakh Culture. However, possibility of the existence in that period of time of representatives of the former culture in almost inaccessible regions of Yakutia is not excluded (Yu.A. Mochanov, S.A. Fedoseyeva, 1983).

At present, in Yakutia over 250 sites of the Bel'kachi Culture are known. At 18 multi-layer(ed) ones, cultural horizons of the Middle Neolithic have been discovered. Several burials dated from the same period have been revealed: the Dzhikindin Burial Ground on the Olyokma river, Onne and Khaiyrghas on the Amga, Rodinsk on the Kolyma, and Tuoy-Khayin in the upper reaches of the Vilyui. These are the ancient burial grounds of those known in Yakutia. On the bases of the middle neolithic sites with precise stratigraphy 10 radiocarbon dates have been fixed. They conform to one another and allow to consider that the Bel'kachi Culture existed  $5200 \pm 100 - 4100 \pm 100$  years B.C.

The main indicative feature of the Bel'kachi Culture wares with cord ornamentation are. Sometimes vessels ornamented by stroke-prints of tiny spade with slots on its working edge (shaped pottery) are met. On the mouth of the Bel'kachi pottery as on the Syalakh ceramic wares a special ornament is traced: parallel carved lines, triangulars drawn by a double line, the lattice ornament with large diamond-shaped cells traced by denticulated stamp. Many wares have wide modelled bolsters under their mouth. These tiny belts are also ornamented by parallel oblique lines of the toothed stamp, by 7-9 parallel lines-rims imprinted with the help of such stamp as well as by the «fir» or diamond-shaped ornament made by the same toothed stamp. The ornament on the body of the Bel'kachi vessels became much more diverse than it used to be at the Syalakh-sites.

In the regions contiguous to Yakutia the cord ornamentation wares are mostly wide-spread on the Middle Amur, in the Gromatukha Culture sites (A.P. Okladnikov, A.P. Derev'anko, 1977). In recent years, the indisputable existence of wares with cord ornamentation on the Lower Amur has been convincingly proved (A.K. Konopatski, K.I. Milutin, 1989). In the second half of the III millennium B.C., such wares existed in the Ust'-Umurchen Culture sites of the Upper Vitim (V.M. Vetrov, 1992). In the Cis-Baikal area of the Serov Period, cord ornamentation wares were not the main type of ceramic vessels. Here, wares ornamented by woven net as well as those with plain walls of the body or vessels ornamented by prints of comb or stroke-prints of tiny spade with slots on its working edge are met. As for the Posol'sk ceramics Alexeyev following L.P. Khlobystin (1978) points out that the concurrence only in prints of «cord» on outside surface of vessels can be noted. Triangular cross-section of the modelled bolsters and their ornamentation by lines produced with receding tiny spade make the Posol'sk ceramics different from the Yakut vessels. The typology of the neolithic cord ornamentation wares of the Trans-Baikal area, and especially that of the main elements of the ornament noticeably differs from the Bel'kachi one.

The technique of production of stone tools in the Middle Neolithic reaches its peak: all known methods of treatment of stone - sawing, drilling and polishing - are used. The stone inventory typical for the Bel'kachi Culture is represented by polished stepped adzes with high dorsal face, axes with «small ears», wedge-shaped axes, retouched adzes, scaled pieces with grooved blade, end scrapers with «small ears», *becs*, lanceolate and oval double-edged flaked knives and spear points, lanceolate and triangular arrow-heads. The last ones have an asymmetric notch in the base and sometimes a single tip. For the first time, faceted medial burins with nuclear and retouched shafts become wide-spread. Burins, scrapers and insets made of blades are numerous in the collections of finds. The flake-scars on the ventral face of the insets are rather long. Among the bone tools, daggers, spear points and arrow-heads, with one or two grooves for blade-insets, shafts for adzes, compound fish-hooks or spoon-baits, harpoons, awls and needles are met.

In comparison with the Syalakh inventory some new elements are recognized in the examined cultural complex such as stepped adzes, axes with «small ears», elongate triangular arrow-heads with bilateral diagonal retouch, end scrapers with «small ears», compound fish-hooks. The share of tools made of blades is reduced.

Comparison of the Bel'kachi Complex with those from the contiguous regions to Yakutia shows that the majority of tools taken separately have their analogies in the neolithic cultures of Siberia. However, taken jointly they have no complete analogies in the concurrent cultures of Eastern Siberia. At the same time the Bel'kachi Culture was not isolated from the influence of the others. The

stone and bone inventory of the Bol'shaya K'yuske Site on the Olyokma was found in association with ceramics ornamented by prints of receding tiny spade with slots on its working edge. This fact is indicative of the existence in the Middle Neolithic of Yakutia of the contact regions that experienced the influence of the Cis-Baikal area cultures. Several decades ago, S.A. Fedoseyeva (1968) considered the region of the Upper Vilyui to be the contact zone of influence of the Cis-Baikal area cultures upon the Yakut ones. Later on this conclusion was revised. A.N. Alexeyev thinks that in time the contact zone of mutual influence of the ancient cultures on the junction of the cultural and historical areas of the Cis-Lena, Cis-Baikal, Trans-Baikal and Cis-Amur Regions can be marked.

*The Ymyyakhtakh Culture of the II millennium B.C.* In the end of the III - the beginning of the II millennia B.C. on the territory of Yakutia the Ymyyakhtakh Culture of the Late Neolithic appeared and became wide spread. It assumed the name of the Ymyyakhtakh Site on the Middle Lena discovered in 1942 by A.P. Okladnikov. In those days, taking into consideration the Cis-Baikal area division of Neolithic into periods, A.P. Okladnikov was right dating this and some other similar sites by the Late Neolithic. For the first time sites of such type were singled out in a special culture by Yu.A. Mochanov (1967, 1968), after discovery of several multi-layer(ed) sites on the Aldan. Later on this culture was investigated by S.A. Fedoseyeva who described the results of her work in a special monograph (1980).

At present, on the territory of Yakutia about 300 sites of the Ymyyakhtakh Culture, those of different types, are known: sites, burial grounds, solitary burials, rock drawings. Over 30 settlements of the Late Neolithic have been fixed in precise stratigraphical conditions. At the last ones cultural complexes contain materials that lack any artifacts of some other cultures. A series of radiocarbon dates (over 30) has been fixed on the charcoal from the Ymyyakhtakh sites. On this basis, the age of the examined culture ranges within the limits of  $3800 \pm 10 - 2900 \pm 100$  years.

The Ymyyakhtakh people are considered to be those who came to Yakutia from the South where they occupied the territory lying between the Baikal and Zeya. In the end of the III - the beginning of the II millennia B.C. they began to dwell on the territory inhabited by the representatives of the Bel'kachi Culture. The culture was finally formed in the Middle Lena basin and a series of elements of the Bel'kachi Culture were included into it (Yu.A. Mochanov, 1960; S.A. Fedoseyeva, 1960). According to S.A. Fedoseyeva, at the final stage of existence of the Ymyyakhtakh Culture metal, copper and bronze artifacts are sporadically used. Gradually the examined culture spreads over the enormous territory occupying several millions of square kilometers. Possibly, in their advancement further to the East the descendants of the Ymyyakhtakh population penetrated into Alaska. The appearance there of the waffle ceramics is indicative of this (Yu.A. Mochanov, 1969; L.P. Khlobystin, 1987). Over the Forest-Tundra

Zone separate groups of the Ymyyakhtakh people penetrated far into the West, to Scandinavia. Their route is marked by the finds of the waffle ceramics at the bearers of the other cultures of the boundary of the II-I millennia B.C. including those of the Western-Siberian Polar Zone, the Mainland Tundra and the Ole-neostrovsk Burial Ground on the Kola Peninsula.

The main indicative feature of the Ymyyakhtakh Culture the waffle ceramics is. The latter ones are often met in association with clay vessels ornamented by prints of receding tiny spade with slots on its working edge or those with plain walls, i.e. lacking any ornament on those outside face. Among the stone inventory the following types of artifacts are recognized: the tri- and tetrahedral arrow-heads having the appearance of elongate or isosceles triangles; bifacially retouched rectangular inserts; subtriangular retouched knives; small subtriangular scrapers with round blade and the dorsal face entirely covered by retouch; polished burins. Bone artifacts are represented by arrow-heads, spear points, harpoons, needles, awls, chain-mail plates.

From the Bel'kachi cultural complex the Ymyyakhtakh inventory differs by such stone artifacts as the tri- and tetrahedral arrow-heads, the stemmed arrow-heads and those having the shape of a wide isosceles triangle, as well as the bone chain-mail plates. The latter, in the S.A. Fedoseyeva's opinion, are indicative of the armed conflicts between stocks and tribes. Several dozens of such chain-mail plates discovered by A.N. Alexeyev in Layer VIII of the Ulakhan Segelennakh witness that this kind of protective requisites was actually used in the Late Neolithic and that the finds from the Burulgin Site were not the accidental ones. Artifacts of the Ymyyakhtakh Culture find their analogies in different regions of Siberia, but in total they represent an original complex typical for this culture.

The type of economy of the neolithic tribes of Yakutia during the whole epoch continues to be as appropriating natural resources. The main trade of the population was hunting. Fishery became much more popular than in the preceding Sumnagin Culture of the Mesolithic Epoch (according to Yu.A. Mochanov, - the Latest Paleolithic). In the New Stone Age for the first time special tools for fishing - harpoons of different types - are fixed. Bullets for fishing nets are more numerous than those at the Sumnagin people. Not only the bullets, but also the technical ornament of the ceramics are indirect indicators of the existence of nets. It must be noted that, judging from distribution of fishing tools in the Neolithic Epoch, fishery was more developed at the south-taiga tribes of Yakutia. In the northern part of the territory of Yakutia no fishing tools have been discovered yet at the neolithic sites, but the remains of the ichthyofauna are met. Judging from the faunal remains and the plots of rock drawings, the main objects of hunting elk, reindeer, roe, pine-wood forest birds and waterfowl were.

Study of the neolithic cultures of Yakutia demonstrates that three consecutively replacing each other cultures - the Syalakh, Bel'kachi and Ymyyakhtakh

Ones, are not connected genetically. The mentioned cases of similarity of some elements of culture are insignificant and can be explained by the mutual influence in the course of the processes of assimilation. On the whole, in every subsequent culture, almost complete replacement of the cultural complex is traced, and it is especially well seen, when the ceramic material is analysed. This corroborates the conclusion that replacement of one of these neolithic cultures by another occurred not by the evolutionary way, but as a result of migrations of new populations.

The analysis of the materials of the neolithic cultures of Yakutia demonstrates that in the Middle Neolithic Epoch, the Upper Vilyui and Olyokma were the regions of contacts with the Cis-Baikal cultural and historical area. Hence it appears that the synchronous cultures of the Cis-Baikal Area could play a special role in the genesis of the Bel'kachi and Ymyyakhtakh Cultures. Correlation of the Yakut neolithic materials with archaeological collections of the neighbouring regions witnessed the ancient contacts with the Trans-Baikal population too. In the Late Neolithic Epoch such region of contacts is traced only on Olyokma. Moreover, the cultural influences were mainly those of the Trans-Baikal population and those had a regular character it was in the Middle Neolithic time. The materials accumulated by present allow to recognize the early and late chronological groups of the burials of representatives of the Ymyyakhtakh Culture.

*The problem of the local cultures in the New Stone Age of Yakutia.*

Recognizing of archaeological cultures of the Neolithic Epoch of Yakutia as well as elaborating of the well-founded relative and absolute chronological scale for the Cis-Lena cultural and historical area put some new problems before investigators, those connected with precisising of the territory of distribution of the cultures and revealing of their possible local differences. Owing to the fact that the Syalakh Culture is insufficiently studied, we consider putting of the problem of the kind for the Early Neolithic to be premature yet (in the North of Yakutia a small number of sites with precise stratigraphy is known; burials and burial mounds have not been discovered).

The analysis of the materials of the Bel'kachi Culture demonstrates that in the Middle Neolithic Epoch some contact zones with the Cis-Baikal neolithic cultures – the Olyokma and Upper Vilyui – are outlined. The specific inventory fixed on the Olyokma and Upper Vilyui seems to be not a local peculiarity of the development of the middle neolithic culture in these regions of Yakutia, but an of short-term and fragmentary (in the archaeological complex) predominance on the territory being of the Cis-Baikal neolithic at the stage of formation of the Bel'kachi Culture. It seems to us that at the given stage of study of the Yakut archaeology the opportunity of existence of some local variants can be supposed only for the Ymyyakhtakh Culture of the Late Neolithic Period.

In the light of new discoveries three local territorial variants of the Ymyyakhtakh Culture are recognized. To Variant 1 ("the northern one") the ymyyak-

htakh complexes containing only the waffle ceramics (of false textile, the chess-draught one) are referred. Besides, the clay vessels of the northern part of Yakutia almost completely lack any complex compositions of their ornament and demonstrate a noticeable sparing use of colour (S.A. Fedoseyeva, 1980; V.G. Argunov, 1990; S.P. Kistenyov, 1990). L.P. Khlobystin (1987) also considers the ceramics from the territories adjoining to the coast of the Arctic Ocean to be different from the ceramic complexes of the Aldan and the other southern regions of the Ymyyakhtakh Culture by the drawn ornaments. The cultural complex of a series of sites located in the north of Yakutia differs also by the comparatively wide distribution in this region of the stemmed stone arrow-heads and by the absence at the late neolithic sites of the complex fishing tools that are often met in the southern-taiga zone of Yakutia (S.I. Everstov, 1988). Sites of Variant 1 of the Ymyyakhtakh Culture are spread over the tundra and forest-tundra zones of Taimyr and Yakutia. At Chukotka, the area of their existence coincides with regions of distribution of the Northern-Chukotka Culture singled out by N.N. Dikov (1979). To Variant 2 ("the southern one") the ymyyakhtakh complexes, containing only shaded ceramics, are referred. In the cultural complexes of the sites of this group ceramics, respectively, has more varied artistic ornament; there are complex fishing tools and the stemmed stone arrow-heads are very seldom met there. The sites of Variant 2 of the Ymyyakhtakh Culture are spread in the taiga zone of Yakutia. From west to east they occupy the territory lying between the right bank tributaries of the Yenisei and the middle reaches of the Anadyr' River at Chukotka where they find the conformities in the Ust'-Bel'sk Culture (N.N. Dikov, 1979). To Variant 3 ("the mixed one") sites of the Ymyyakhtakh Culture where the waffle and shaded ceramics are met in the same cultural layers are referred. A.N. Alexeyev is not sure in the rightness of singling out of Variant 3, for there are doubts concerning "the purity" of the cultural complexes of the sites of this group. Of a special doubt are complexes of the Bel'kachl I and Kurungs II Sites often taken for the typical ones in attempts to correlate the materials of the late neolithic sites with mixed cultural remains.

In Yakutia occasional finds of bronze wares were known as early as in the XIXth century. Nevertheless, for a long time, scientists continued to think that there was no independent production of metals in the examined region of North Asia. All bronze artifacts were considered to be those "imported", got in exchange from more developed steppe tribes. The ancient population of Yakutia seemed to be on the level of the Stone Age up to the appearance there of the Turks-cattle-breeders who brought the developed metallurgy of iron with them. These erroneous views were revised due to the results of works of the Lena Historical and Archaeological Expedition under the leadership of A.P. Okladnikov. Later on, study of the Bronze Epoch was connected with the activities of the Cis-Lena Archaeological Expedition under the leadership of Yu.A. Mochanov. Discovery and investigation of the multi-layer(ed) sites on

Aldan allowed to recognize in precise stratigraphical conditions complexes of the Bronze Age. Of a special importance the bronze knife with wooden handle found at the Ust'Mil Site was. This find allowed to establish a direct connection of the bronze wares with varied materials of the settlements.

Having taken into consideration the importance of this discovery, the culture of the Bronze Age was given the name "Ust'Mil" (S.A. Fedoseyeva, 1970).

At present in Yakutia about a hundred of sites of the Ust'-Mil' Culture have been discovered. At 8 of them, the multi-layer(ed) ones, unmixed cultural remains of the Bronze Epoch have been fixed. Besides, 5 solitary burials of the same period have been found. On the Yakut rock drawings numerous depictions were made in that very time. Four radiocarbon dates have been obtained on charcoal from the cultural layers of the Bronze Age of Yakutia. The dates range within 3300+100 - 2500+100 years B.P.

The Bronze Age of Yakutia is studied mainly on the basis of the ceramic complex, for ceramics is the most numerous and pronounced material at the settlements. The stone and bone inventory is not so varied and numerous as the ceramics.

The Ust'-Mil ceramics has waffle technical ornament and can be plain. The vessels are round-bottomed, many of them are those of the open type (the latter appeared in the end of the Late Neolithic Epoch). At the early stage of the Bronze Age of Yakutia the two-layer(ed) ceramics, often with admixture of vegetable remains, existed. Later on, such vessels became one-layer(ed) with thin walls. They were made of dense paste without admixtures. The artistic ornament of the Ust'-Mil vessels is rather varied. The main ornament is represented by different combinations of thin and stamped belts-bolsters, plain or split. The latter have triangular or semi-oval cross-section and are sometimes connected between themselves by vertical or oblique bolsters. In some cases, the space between the bolsters is covered with nail-shaped or round pressings. The drawn ornament is very seldom met. In the Bronze Age ceramics decorated by "pearls" and prints of the toothed-stamp was widely used. Vessels of the Bronze Epoch retain in considerable extent the late neolithic traditions: the waffle technical ornament, the multi-layer(ed) paste, with admixture of grass, the pronounced neck and round bottom, some variants of the artistic ornamentation, especially modelled bolsters on the vessels having plain walls.

The stone inventory of the Ust'-Mil' Culture is represented by end scrapers, knives, arrow-heads, scaled pieces, prismatic and conic cores. In comparison with the Ymyyakhtakh Culture, the tools made of blades considerably reduced their number. The technique of treatment of the latter is simplified. Nevertheless, the stone inventory of the Ust'-Mil people finds many analogies in the Ymyyakhtakh Complex. Sometimes, flat mother-of-pearl beads - circular pieces and tiny beads of white pyrophyllite are met. A.P. Okladnikov (1949, 1965) explains the

presence of these articles in the collections from the sites of the Bronze Age of Yakutia by the influence of the Glazkov Culture of the Cis-Baikal Area.

On the whole, the bronze metallurgy is the local one. The workshops of foundry men of bronze on the Lena discovered by A.P. Okladnikov witness the fact convincingly enough. Such workshops were discovered later on on the Vilyui and Ol'ekma (S.A. Fedoseyeva, 1968; N.D. Arkhipov, 1976, 1989; A.N. Alexeyev, 1981, 1987). At these sites forges for making of bronze, nozzles, blacksmith's bellows, casting moulds for casting of wares and so on have been found. All this is indicative of the existence in Yakutia of an independent center of the bronze metallurgy.

At the sites of Yakutia 19 bronze wares have been discovered yet: 4 spears, 5 swords, 4 knives, 1 celt, 1 needle, 3 pendants and 1 boiler. All the finds excluding knives from the Ust'-Mil' and Khatyngnaakh Sites have no stratigraphical correlation. Nevertheless, the typological analogies are indicative of their undoubted affinity to the Bronze Age. By the method of half-quantitative spectral analysis it has been established that the majority of these wares are made of the arsenious bronze and a part of them - of the tin and arsenious-tin bronze. The diversity of the chemical composition of the bronze witnesses, possibly, of the affinity of the bronze wares of Yakutia to different chronological stages of the examined period or to some local variants of the Ust'-Mil' Culture. The fine treatment, high technical and artistic level of the bronze artifacts exclude the thought about their spontaneous, occasional production. Undoubtedly, they were cast following the certain canons and copying the samples tested long ago. A casting mould for production of celts of the Karasuk type found at a workshop of a foundry man in Yakutsk, near the regional hospital (A.P. Okladnikov, 1955, p. 152) witnesses eloquently this. At the same time, the bronze wares are indicative of the cultural contacts that existed at the Yakut tribes with the Glazkov, Seymin-Turbin, and Karasuk-Tagar Cultures of Western and Southern Siberia and those of Central Asia. Such diverse parallels of the Ust'-Mil' Culture are quite assumed and they may mean not only the genetic lines, but also the culture-economic contacts, for in the Bronze Age everywhere the growth of exchange and ethnic contacts between different tribes is traced.

Fair considerable number of finds of the bronze arms, specifically swords and spear points, is indicative of the growing role of military activities in the life of the Ust'-Mil' people. Moreover, arms, especially swords and daggers, were the symbols of power - and this allows to suppose the probable opportunity of some social changes at the Yakut tribes of the Bronze Age too. However, use of the bronze tools did not change the type of the Ust'-Mil' people's economy. As the source of their existence, hunting supplemented by fishing and gathering remained.

At present, one can't surely recognize separate chronological stages of the Bronze Age of Yakutia, though some attempts of such kind were made by

A.P. Okladnikov, I. Ye. Zыkov, L.P. Khlobystin, V.I. Ertyukov. A.N. Alexeyev is agreed with S.A. Fedoseyeva that the terms "Eneolithic", "the Early Bronze Age", "Undeveloped Bronze Age" themselves do not make clear the problem of existence of some special stages. Using of these terms draws only to the artificial comparison of the sites of one and the same culture, misrepresenting of the historical reality. L.P. Khlobystin, for instance, refers the Siktakh Site dated by 3400 years ago to the Bronze Age and the Site on the Chirovoye Lake dated by 2800 years ago to the Late Neolithic Epoch (S.A. Fedoseyeva, 1950, p. 214). A.N. Alexeyev considers that the beginning of the Bronze Age of Yakutia is documented by such developed forms of bronze tools as the Ust'-Mil', Khatyngnaakh, S'ul'dukar knives and the Mur'in and Pronin celts. In the ceramic complex vessels with unsplit and split modelled bolsters, combed ornament and "pearls" correspond to them. All the rest types of ceramics chronologically coincide with existence of bronze swords, spear points, pendants. It seems to A.N. Alexeyev that the obtained materials allow to recognize some periods within the limits of the XIII (XIV) - III (IV) centuries B.C., but the simple artifacts of metal from the Bugachan, Ichchil'akh, Pokrovsk Burials and the Sikt'akh I Site must not be included into the Bronze Age. Their appearance did not cause any changes in the character and content of the Ymyyakhtakh Culture. Most probably, the solitary copper wares at the Ymyyakhtakh sites reflect the level of technological search inherent in many archaeological cultures of Eurasia in the end of the Stone Age.

Judging from maintaining of many Ymyyakhtakh traditions in the material culture of the Ust'-Mil' people, the Bronze Age culture ripens in the local late neolithic environment. The bearers of the Bronze Age culture were mostly the Ymyyakhtakh people, transformed in the course of the evolution of their culture. The latter ones had more or less developed cultural contacts with population of neighbouring regions in the south and south-east. The role of the strange population in the formation of the Ust'-Mil' Culture was not so significant as it was earlier supposed.