

FOUR SHORT TRANSLATIONS RELATED TO THE ESKIMO REGION

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ABSTRACT

Presented here is a collection of four short articles related to the prehistory of Northeast Asia. The articles are taken from works dating between 1966 and 2001. The first two articles are by Nikolai N. Dikov, arguably the “old man” of far Northeast Asian archaeology. Dikov conducted considerable work in Chukotka, Kamchatka, and even Wrangel Island from 1955 until his death in 1996 (see Lebedintsev 2015). The third article is by Tamara M. Dikova (1933–1981), Nikolai’s first wife (not to be confused with Margarita Dikova [Kir’yak], his second wife; both wives were archaeologists in their own right). Although Tamara Dikova’s area of expertise was Kamchatka, she discusses labrets found there, an item of interest in the Eskimo region. The final article, by Sergei V. Alkin, is a study of “winged objects” (or “winged-like objects”) found on the Yangtze River in China. Although China is generally considered outside Northeast Asia proper, “winged objects” are one of the enigmas of the far Northeast. Dikova’s and Alkin’s articles are of interest because they are from outside the Bering Strait region. Here follows a brief introduction to each article by Alexander I. Lebedintsev.

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INTRODUCTION

Alexander I. Lebedintsev

The first of the following four articles deals with materials from Nikolai N. Dikov's archaeological survey of the coast of Chukotka, in the region of Chegitun village, in 1963. He found there an early Eskimo site at the mouth of the Chegitun River. The houses were in disarray. In the soil that had sloughed from the bluff there were bone harpoon heads, pieces of slate knives, a fish hook, parts of reindeer harnesses, handles for burins, and punches. At 1.5 km from the village, on the top of one of the hills, burials with rectangular stone masonry were discovered, in one of which were scattered human bones. On the right rocky bank of the Chegitun River, 1.5 to 2 km from the village, there were more than 50 rectangular slab enclosures (a second Chegitun cemetery). Dikov partially excavated the cemetery, examining seven burials. The burials were positioned with the head to the northeast, except for one grave, which was in the opposite direction. The preservation of the skeletons was poor; in some graves the bones were in fact missing. In the graves were stone tools (spear points, knives), bone harpoon heads, leisters, and other tools for hunting sea mammals. On the south slope of the hill, on the left bank of the Chegitun River (2 km from the mouth), three graves were discovered. In one, a burial of a man was excavated. The second and third burials were assigned to the Punuk period. The first burial site and graves were dated to the middle of the first millennium AD.

The second article concerns the Seshan site. There, a complex of Old Eskimo sites of the end of the first millennium BC and first half of the first millennium AD was discovered and partially investigated by Nikolai N. Dikov in 1963. On a cape-like projection of the left bank of the river, at the place of the abandoned Chukchi village of Seshan, the cultural layer of an older site was discovered. In the ancient site were the remains of dwellings with whale ribs protruding from them. In the scree of the bluff were found artifacts from Old Bering Sea times: stone spear points, slate knives, bone harpoon heads, and other artifacts and items of walrus tusk. Based on charcoal from the layer, a radiocarbon date of 2022 ± 100 (MAG-104) was obtained. On the top of the bluff, on the right side of the stream, ritual stone works with walrus skulls were discovered. They lay in two rows, the tusks turned toward the

haul out. It is supposed that this display is connected with a maritime hunting ritual in which hunters left the skull of the first procured walrus of the year at the haul-out. Not far from these stone works was a temporally late cemetery of burials in stone crevices. In the one investigated burial, belonging to an earlier time—Old Bering Sea, with rectangular stone enclosure—were found the remains of a child's burial.

The third article contains research by Tamara M. Dikova on labrets from southern Kamchatka. All the labrets were found in Neolithic cultural layers of sites of the Tar'in culture (second to first millennium BC) in the region of the east coast of the peninsula. Two basic types of labrets are distinguished: "лабретные шпильки" ("labret pins" or "labret studs") for wearing in the nasal septum and "лабретки" ("labrets") for decoration of the lip or cheek. Based on form they are separated into four groups. Dikova examines the different methods of wearing labrets and suggests that labrets are tribal or clan indicators. In Nikolai N. Dikov's opinion (1979), the presence of labrets among the Tar'in people attests to the strong Eskimo-Aleut traditions of the Tar'in culture, which go back, he suggests, to the late Paleolithic culture of Layer VI of the Ushki sites.

The final article, by Sergei V. Alkin, presents enigmatic "butterfly-like artifacts" of the Neolithic Khemudu culture (5300–3500 BC), discovered on the lower course of the Yangtze River in China. The similarity of these artifacts to Bering Sea "winged objects" is noted. Common design features are provided for them, but their differences also were determined. In the author's opinion, the similarity of these artifacts attests to connections of the earliest Paleo-Asians with southern cultures, expressed in the similarity of cultural elements in the East Asian southern arc of correspondences.

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CHEGITUN EARLY ESKIMO CEMETERIES¹

N. N. Dikov

In 1963 an archaeological survey was conducted along the sea coast of Chukotka (Dikov 1965). While the abundant materials of this expedition are being prepared for a monographic publication, it makes sense to produce several preliminary reports about the most interesting of the discovered sites. We will begin this series with a description of the Chegitun antiquities, inasmuch as they will illuminate the very poorly investigated period of history of the coastal population of Chukotka.

At the mouth of the Chegitun River, in the vicinity of the Chukchi village of Chegitun, a cultural layer of an ancient site and three cemeteries were found (Fig. 1). The cultural layer of the ancient site was traced in the upper part of a 5 m high bluff on the left of the mouth of the river in

a place where the old village of Chegitun was still located a few decades ago. The pits of the old pit houses have already become invisible; they were destroyed by the most recent cellars. We cleaned off the cultural layer on the steep slope below these cellars at a height of 4–6 m above the level of the spit. A strip of sod 4 m long, 1 m wide, and 0.4 m deep was removed down to permafrost. Two heads of toggling harpoons of the Thule type were found (one with a broken end), fragments of slate knives, a piece of a sled stanchion, handles of deer antler for burins, and various items of walrus tusk: a toggle for deer harness, fishhook, punch, blank of an arrow point, and others.

THE FIRST CHEGITUN CEMETERY

It is located on one of the ridges 1.5 km southwest of the village of Chegitun, 400–500 m from the river. Here, three rather noticeable stone features were situated side by side in the form of rectangular enclosures oriented from northeast to southwest. Nothing was found under two of them except a sterile base soil directly under the thin sod. And only in one (No. 1), at a depth of 20 cm, were preserved isolated human bones (ribs, femurs, shoulder blades without epiphyses) and a long rod of walrus tusk. On a

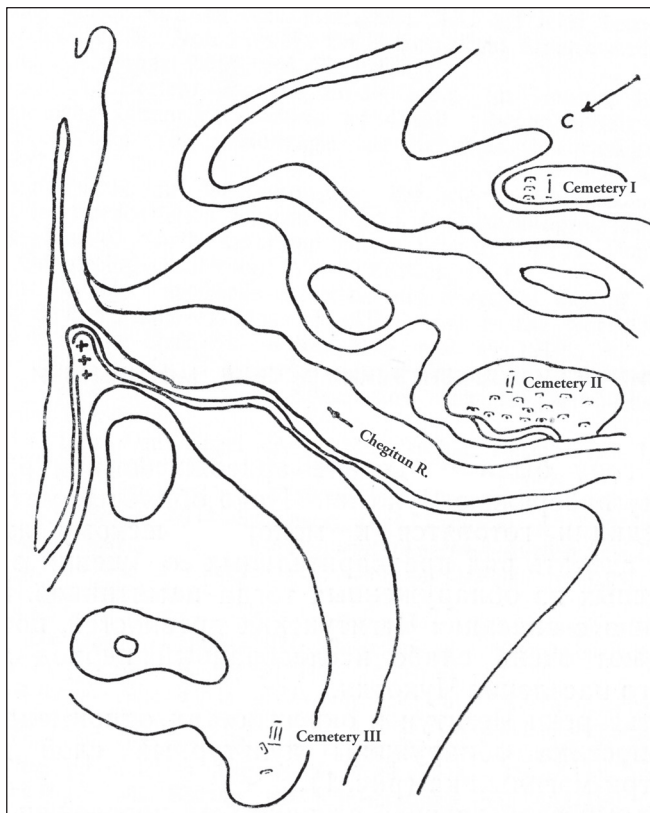


Figure 1. Disposition of the cemeteries.



Figure 2. External view of the second burial site.

neighboring knoll of this ridge, closer to the village at a slate outcrop, traces were noted of some excavations carried out for similar, probably later, burials.

THE SECOND CHEGITUN CEMETERY

It is located on a high rock shore on the right bank of the Chegitun River, 1.5 to 2 km from its mouth. The cemetery occupies a substantial area (more than 150 m²) and consists of more than 50 rectangular slab enclosures constructed on the small-rubble surface, strewn with stones.

We excavated seven graves in this cemetery. For all of them, the enclosures were oriented in approximately the same direction, with the head part to the northeast—except Grave No. 3, where the human remains lay in the opposite direction. All burials were covered with stones and only lightly strewn with earth, and as a result the preservation of the skeletons was unsatisfactory.

The first grave investigated here contained an incomplete skeleton, laid on its back with legs extended and hands on the waist. The skull and right femur were not preserved. Near the pelvis on the right side lay a large harpoon head of Birnirk type; just below the ribs was a punch, and near the bones of the right foot a bear's canine and a tooth from a walrus pup.

No bones were preserved inside the second grave enclosure, but there was a bone leister point.

In the rectangular enclosure of the third grave lay the remains of a skeleton. Its arrangement allowed us to conclude that the deceased (oriented as an exception with head to the southwest) here was placed in a pose of lying on the right side with legs bent: its femurs (without epiphyses) were directed toward the skull, of which only the lower jaw was preserved. Of the arms only the humeri (also without epiphyses) were preserved. In the region of the pelvis we found a piece of a Birnirk-type harpoon head and boat-hook head and in the place of the skull, a bone punch.

On the modern ground surface near the east corner of the stone enclosure of the fourth grave lay pieces of thick-walled clay vessels and a slate spear point. No human bones were found within the grave, but there were more items than in other enclosures of this cemetery. In the center, at a depth of about 30 cm, side by side with a large wooden slab lay two knives of argillaceous slate and three toggling harpoon heads of Birnirk and early Punuk type, as well as of Thule 2 type. In addition, there were bone punches and a slat from armor decorated with Punuk engraving. In the

south corner of the grave a small bone knife with a hole in the handle was discovered.

The fifth grave was also very interesting. Inside its enclosure, at a depth of 0.5 m and covered with stones, an almost complete skeleton of a person with well-preserved skull lay on its “back” with legs extended (Fig. 2). All the goods accompanying it were found on the right side of the pelvis: two bone points (one of them covered with engraving in the form of transverse cuts), two leister points, two bone boat-hook heads, a bead of walrus tusk, and two pieces of argillaceous slate knives.

In the stone enclosure of the sixth grave, at a depth of 20 cm, an almost completely preserved human skeleton lay on its “back” with legs extended. Near its left elbow was a ground stone knife.

Finally, in the seventh enclosure, at a depth of 20 cm, were pieces of a pelvis, two femurs with broken epiphyses, and a small cluster of burial items near the right hip joint: a large, crudely chipped basalt spear point, an argillaceous slate knife, and a piece of the same kind of knife, as well as five barbed bone points of a leister.

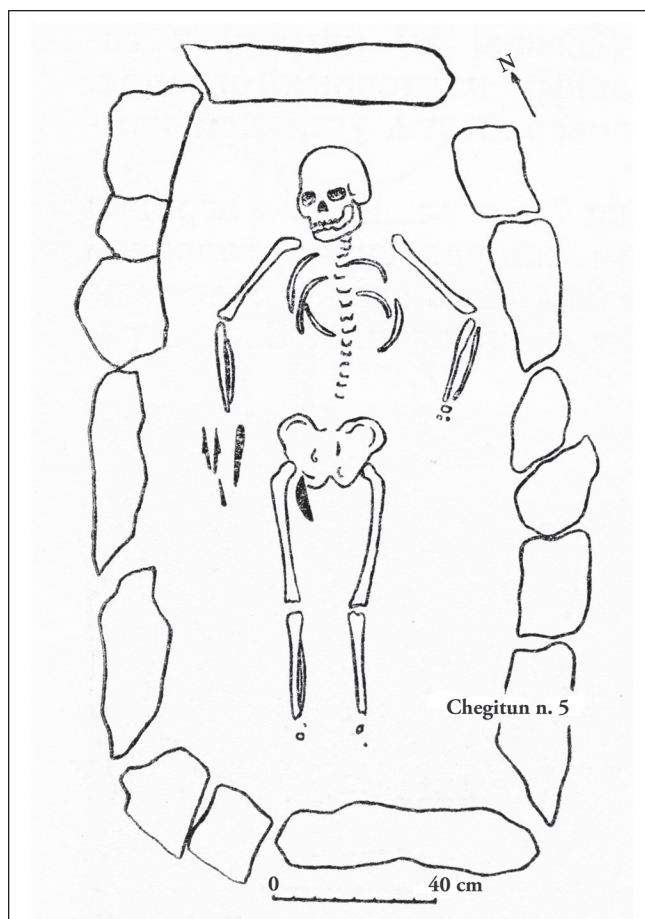


Figure 2. Contents of the fifth grave of the second cemetery.

THE THIRD CHEGITUN CEMETERY

It is located on the left bank of the Chegitun River on the south slope of a hill 2 km from the river mouth. On a small (about 20 m²), lightly sloping area of the slope there are evidently several earthen graves, but their enclosures are not visible on the surface. Only one grave revealed itself by the slightly projecting edges of stone slabs.

The rectangular enclosure of this grave (2 x 0.9 m) was constructed of slabs of natural stone vertically inserted in the ground. The inside, to a depth of 25 cm, was covered with stones and strewn with earth, in contrast to the graves of the previous cemetery (No. 2). The fill kept the bones well preserved. This was true soil fill and not simply covering the deceased with stones. On the bed-rock bottom of the grave, at a depth of 35–40 cm, lay the remains of the deceased—an almost entirely preserved skeleton (Fig. 3). Only the bones of its hands were gone. Judging by the more massive femurs, the narrow pelvis, and massive skull, the skeleton belonged to an adult male. Near its right knee lay a large bone slat of armor broken into parts, and between the femurs two bone pegs. All the remaining items—and there were many of them—were discovered near the left side of the deceased. Along its elbow were the remains of a wooden rod and a long bone lance. There also lay another bone peg with a head, as well as eight barbed points of walrus tusk, evidently for a leister, similar to the two that lay between the femurs; two large bone arrow points (one with a forked seat); a miniature winged object; a small fluted bone object of indiscernible assignment with holes (both decorated with perforating design); three bone punches; a piece of a clay vessel; a pin; and three heads of toggling harpoons of the Thule-Birnirk type (Figs. 4, 5).

This burial, like those of the second cemetery, belongs to the still very-little-studied culture of the Punuk period in Chukotka. In it, as is evident by the character of the bone artifacts found in the graves, especially the toggling harpoon heads, is very noticeable influence of North American Eskimo cultures of Birnirk and Thule. On the other hand, pure Old Bering Sea traditions are also con-

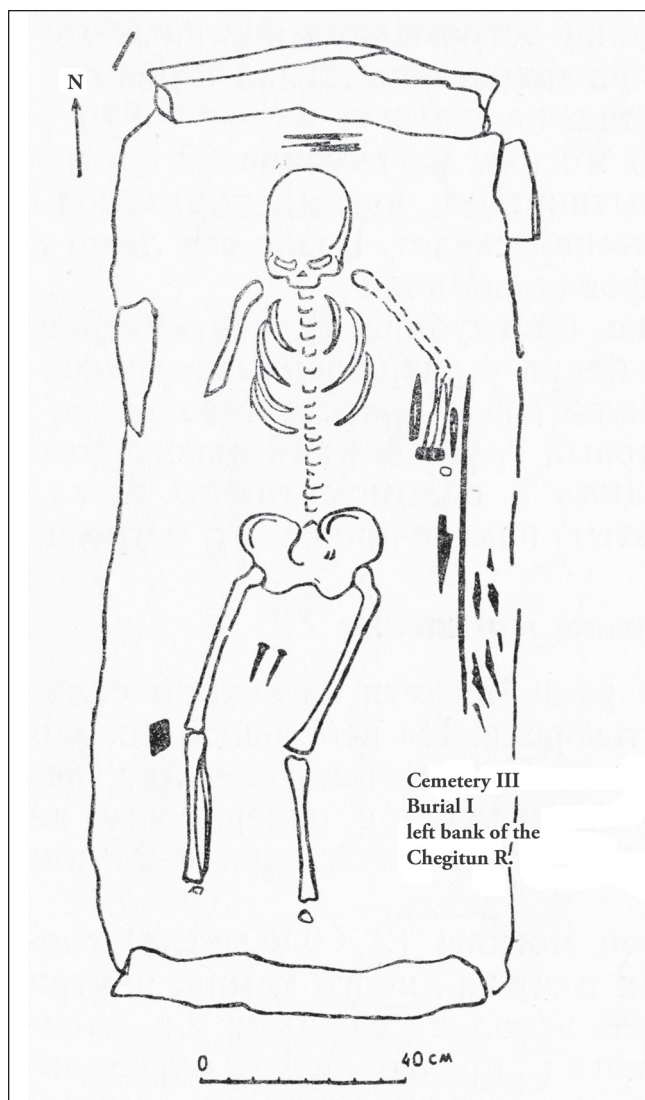


Figure 3. Contents of the first grave of the third cemetery.

tinued at this time on the north shore of Chukotka. This is clearly attested by the find of a miniature winged object in the last grave (Fig. 4), a typically Old Bering Sea attribute. Before us, consequently, is a culture that grew on the base of the highly developed local culture of Old Bering Sea people.

It is quite evident that further study of the old Chegitun cemeteries would be of great interest not only to archaeologists but for anthropologists as well.

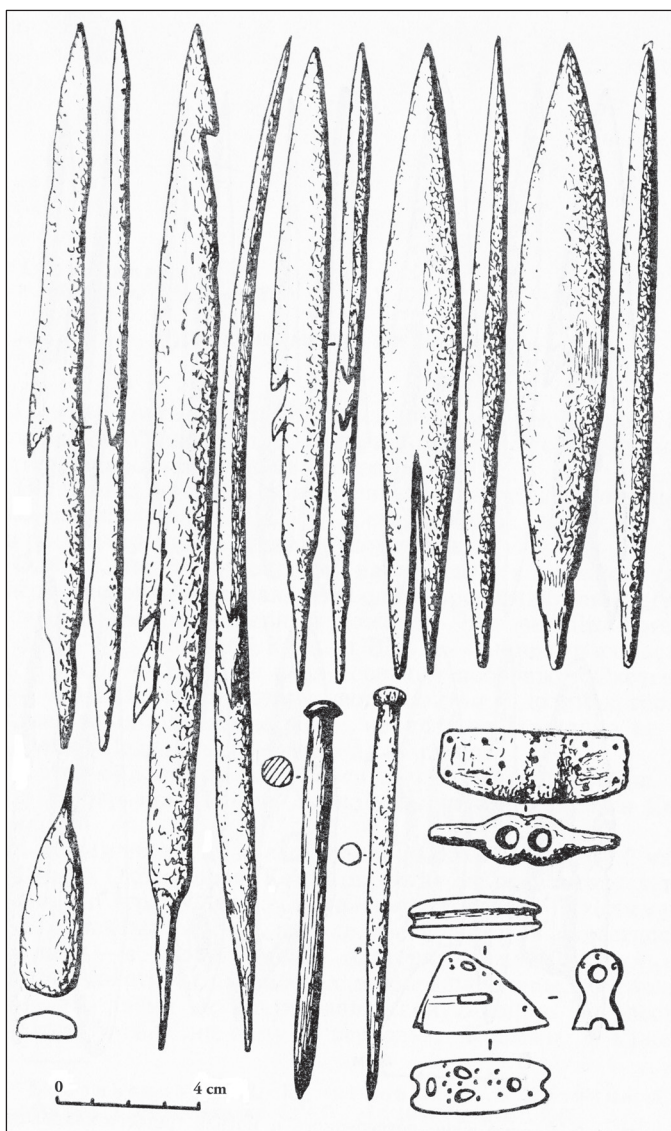


Figure 4. Personal items from a grave of the third cemetery.

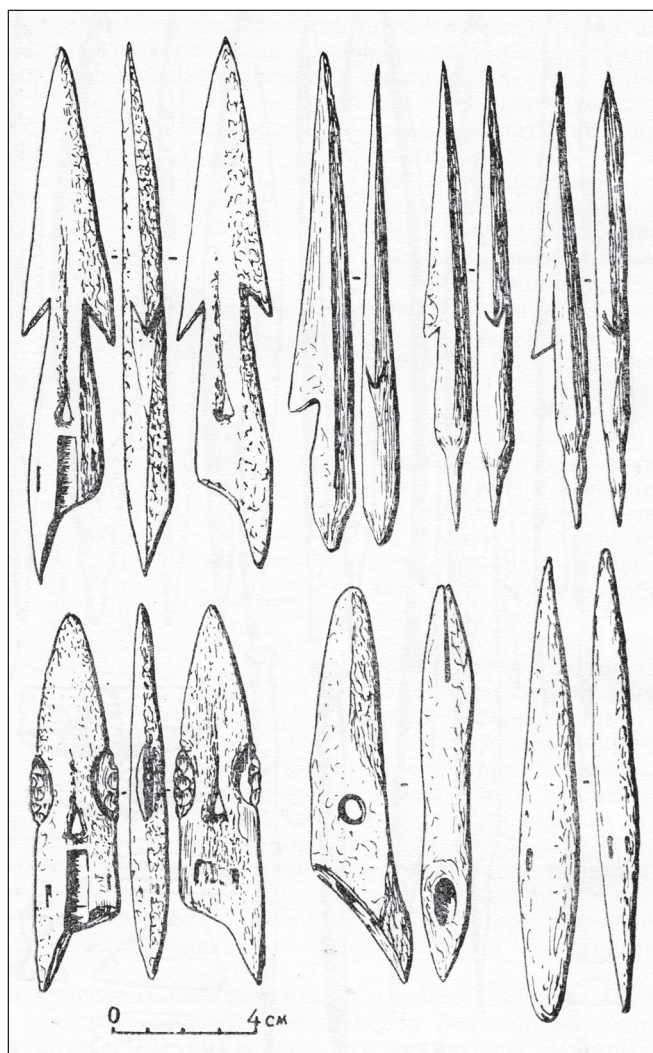


Figure 5. Personal items of the deceased in a grave of the third cemetery.

THE ANTIQUITY OF SESHAN²

N. N. Dikov

On the cliffs of Cape Inkigur (Seshan) there is the commotion of a large bird rookery. At the foot of the cliffs, it was until recently possible to hear the fearsome roar of walruses. It is natural that, long ago, people settled in these favorable places, abundant in food. Until comparatively recently, their village of Seshan prospered beyond the turn of the cape, on a high, precipitous bank on the left side of a small valley along which a stream flows. And now, only the ruins of this Chukchi village of sea mammal hunters remain (Fig. 1).

We closely examined the ruins of Seshan and established that, before the Chukchi, Eskimos had lived here many centuries ago. Not even the ruins of their camp were now preserved. The traces of this more ancient life appear now in the form of a so-called cultural layer, which we traced along the upper edge of a 15 m bluff, under the ruins of the Chukchi village.

Clearing off the upper part of the denuded bluff, we became convinced that the Eskimo cultural layer had a depth of 2 m. We traced it over an extent of 18 m along the edge of the bluff. It contained items of Old Bering Sea appearance: a piece of a toggling harpoon head, flaked

stone spear points (one stemmed and two leaf-shaped), slate knives, bone boat-hook heads, scrapers for cleaning walrus gut, punches, a blank of a toggling harpoon head, handles and mattocks of walrus tusk covered with engraving, a buckle, and other items of walrus tusk (Fig. 2).

On the top of the cliff, on the right side of the stream, were ritual stone features with bear and walrus skulls (Fig. 3). You can see one of them in the photograph (Fig. 4).

I have already briefly reported on this enclosure (Shavkunov 1964:715). However, it now deserves a more detailed description. The walrus skulls lay there in two rows. They were turned with the tusks toward the camp, to the northeast. Large blocks of stone were piled up in a broad oval around them. A bear's skull and deer antlers lay there (Fig. 5).

A picture typical not only for the Eskimos but also for the coastal Chukchi—this was a site of special ritual for sea mammal hunters, connected with killing walruses at a haul-out. Every year after such a killing, the Chukchi and Eskimos placed there the head of the first walrus they killed at this haul-out. It is interesting that they first consulted with each such walrus head about the order of production of all killing in the year. These were not only the signs of attention to hunting animals—the source of life for the hunters—inspired by a primitive world view but also a distinctive method of managing the hunt, its regulation (Shavkunov 1964:715).

On top of the same cliff, not far from the enclosures with walrus skulls, is a cemetery of burials in stone notches. In this late burial field, which has ethnographic rather than archaeological significance, were several vertically set stone slabs. According to the local Chukchi population—as reported to us by V.V. Leont'ev—the idea exists that such stelae were raised in memory of those hunters who died at sea. It is not out of the question, however, that they are also connected with the cult of the ancestors. They are very reminiscent of south Siberian stelae in honor



Figure 1. All that remained of Seshan.

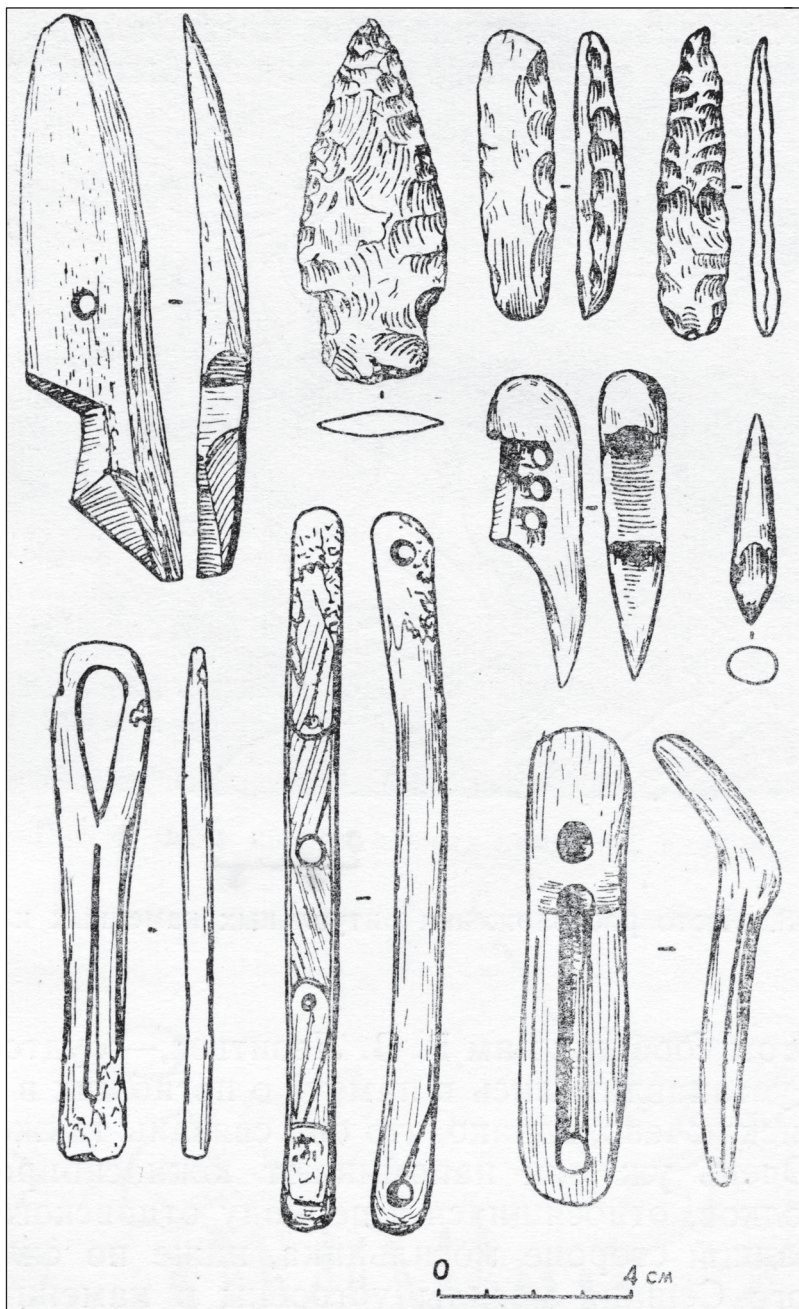


Figure 2. Items of Old Bering Sea appearance in the cultural layer.

of the ancestors that belong to the period of the paternal clan.

On the west side of the cemetery, below the slope facing old Seshan, there were graves arranged in small stone burial mounds that had a slot in the middle. Here, one grave struck the eye as sharply different in its arrangement within the rectangular fence that is so familiar to us, so typical for the ancient graves of these places. We excavated it.

Its slab enclosure was 2.2 m long, 1 m wide, and 55 cm deep. It was oriented from north to south. Under the sod, horizontal slabs of stone lay over the whole expanse. Under one of the slabs in the southern part, at a depth of 35 cm, was a human skull, and farther toward the north were the remains of several other bones: a disintegrating pelvis and femurs without epiphyses. Judging by the distribution of these bones, the deceased had been placed on its back with extended legs. The proportions of the bones were clearly those of a child. At the head stood a pot, whose thick-walled sherds were preserved, and a pick of walrus tusk. A knife of argillaceous slate lay on the child's chest (Fig. 6).

The features of the burial ceremony noted here, and especially the arrangement of the enclosure and the position and orientation of the deceased, permit considering this an Old Bering Sea child burial. We had evidently excavated a representative of those people to whom the Old Bering Sea camp on the left side of the small Seshan valley belonged.

The antiquities of Seshan go back, we became convinced, to the very early periods of Eskimo history. They still await their researchers.

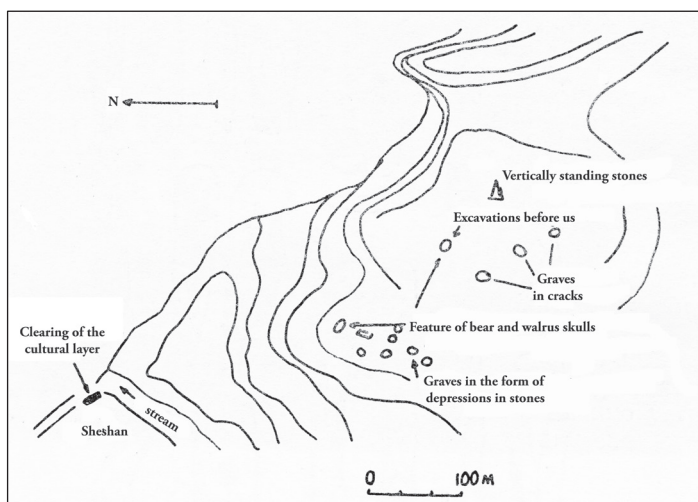


Figure 3. The disposition of ritual stone features.



Figure 4. One of the ritual stone features.



Figure 5. Schema of a stone feature.

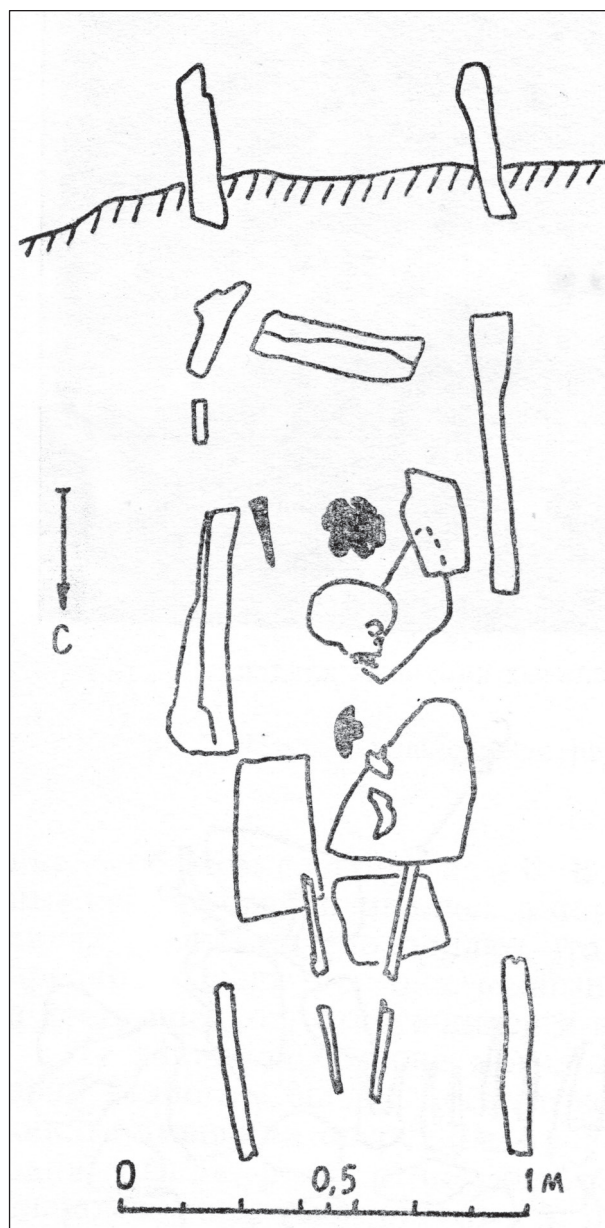


Figure 6. The contents of one of the graves.

LABRETS OF SOUTHERN KAMCHATKA³

Tamara M. Dikova

As a result of archaeological investigations in the territory of southern Kamchatka, a rather large collection was acquired of stone and bone objects that have received the name “labrets” or “labret pins” in the specialized literature. It is necessary to note that, among the numerous descriptions of archaeological collections, these objects are examined least of all and are mentioned in only a few works of the archaeological specialists of Northeast Asia and northern America. Meanwhile, there is nothing in the ethnographic literature on special investigations of labrets.

The collection of labrets represented here includes 27 specimens found in Neolithic cultural layers at the sites of Lopatka III, Yavino VII, and Avacha and ascribed to Old Itel'men—the Tar'in culture of southern Kamchatka (Dikova 1979:82–107). Almost every artifact is unique and distinct in form. In the literature, the traditional idea of labrets as “male lip ornaments” has been established. Analysis of the acquired collection rejects such assertions as illogical. We consider that these were not just lip ornaments. The “labret pins” or labret “pins for piercing and widening holes” cited in some investigations by archaeologists are in reality independent decorations.

The form of the labrets depends on the method and place they are worn. For this reason we distinguish two basic types of labrets: labrets for wearing in the nasal septum, which are classified as “labret pins,” and labrets that decorate the lips or cheeks. These types of labrets are mentioned in literary sources and archival documents. Thus, in 1730, Afanasii Mel'nikov, one of Russia's earliest explorers, encountered on East Cape “people with teeth [labrets—T.D.] of walrus bone set in slits in the cheeks” (Markov 1976:433). Another explorer, Dmitrii Pavluts'kii, in 1731 fought with the warlike Chukchi (Eskimos?—T.D.) near Cape Dezhneva. After the battle “the Russians . . . found the body of a ‘toothed person.’” He had “holes in the lip in which teeth carved from walrus teeth are set” (Markov 1976:434). Potap Kuzmich Zaikov, a member of a trip to North America in 1783, wrote in his

journal that “American people [Alaskan Eskimos—T.D.] smeared their faces with paint the color of copper, cut holes in the nose and lower lip” (Markov 1976:578). There is another report of the wearing of labrets. *Pyatidesyatnik* [a commander of 50 Cossacks] Matvei Skrebykin, commander of the Anadyr fort, recorded the exploit of Petr Popov, who “went to the Nose” (Markov 1976:399)⁴ [North America—T.D.], and a report is cited about the Chukchi [Eskimos—T.D.], including “the toothed ones”: “And teeth among those peoples, besides the natural ones, are small bones of walrus tooth inserted in the cheeks by the side of the natural ones” (Markov 1976:400).

Thus, labrets, according to eyewitness testimony, were worn in various parts of the face: (1) in holes in both cheeks (“set in slits in the cheeks,” “small bones . . . inserted in the cheeks by the side of the natural ones”); (2) two each in the lip, upper or lower (he had in the “lip holes”); (3) simultaneously in the nasal septum and in the lower lip (“holes in the nose and lower lip”).

Judging by the dimensions and forms of labrets in the collection, there were other ways of wearing them. We will examine these artifacts from this point of view. First of all, we entirely disagree with some descriptions by Murdoch (1892) of the tradition of wearing labrets, mainly because pins for perforating and expanding holes in the corners of lips existed. Most probably they once did this painful operation with a special instrument, possibly a cutting one, on the day of the initiation of the youth. They operated only on the part of the face where the youth, a male, according to the custom of the tribe had to wear the labret all his life, inserted during a solemn gathering of elders.

The acquired collection can be divided into four groups: (1) pinlike with a pointed end, (2) pinlike with a broad straight end, (3) hat-shaped, and (4) cuff link-shaped. They were all set in a slit in different parts of the face. In the author's opinion, the initial form should be considered button-shaped labrets recently discovered in Kamchatka in Layer 6 of the Ushki I site in a ritual

dwelling of proto-Eskimo-Aleuts (Dikov 1979:109). These are tiny artifacts of steatite, round in plan. On the outer side a prominence is carved into a kind of lug, and two holes are drilled through for sewing, possibly with sinew.

According to the method of wearing, in each group there are some specimens that should be distinguished separately. For example, a pin-shaped labret of andesite-basalt with a pointed end 10 cm long with a 2 cm head span (Fig. 1:1) could have been worn in the nasal septum. We see such an ornament on the chief of an Australian tribe, represented by the artist Mikhailov (Bellingshausen Expedition) (*Народы Австралии* 1956:49). In fact, such a large ornament would have been most favorable for wearing exactly on this part of the face.

The pin-shaped labrets with a pointed end (Fig. 2:7, 8, 10, 16) and possibly with the flat end (Fig. 2:1–5; 1:2–5) could be worn in the lower lip most probably singly, as seen in the photograph of Richards Bay [South Africa?—*trans.*] representing women of the Morus [?—*trans.*] tribe with lip

ornaments (Ratzel 1901:274). Of course, such method of wearing, in the words of F. Ratzel, requires “breaking out some of the front teeth, for the most part, the two middle ones in the lower jaw” (Ratzel 1901:274).

It must be noted that pin-shaped labrets, both with the pointed and with the flat end, are alike. They can differ only by the head span and length of the shaft. However, distinctive specimens are encountered among them. A gray labret with dark specks of jasper-like stone has two small constrictions in the middle of the shaft, which create the illusion of a decorative ridge (Fig. 2:3). The pinkish labret with dark specks of jasper-like stone has grooves on both plains in the upper part of the shaft (close to the head) (Fig. 2:4). On the labret of white-brown jasper a small lug was carved on the straight end (Fig. 2:2).

Of much interest is a labret found by N.N. Dikov in 1962 in Neolithic Layer 2 of the Ushki II site (Dikov 1969:208–209, Fig. 114:1). It belongs to the pin-shaped type, with a straight end, its shaft 1.5 x 1 cm thick and 1.8 cm long. The surface of the outer plain of the straight end was decorated with rich pink paint, the remains of which can be very clearly seen. The broad plain of the head (1.3 cm) inside the lip is covered with vertical strokes. Since the arrangement of the strokes is without order, they cannot be considered a decorative element. They are most probably the result of contact of the soft stone with the teeth of the labret wearer. Consequently, the wearing of such an ornament did not always require the removal of teeth.

All the pin-shaped labrets are symmetrical; they were worn as a single specimen. The exception is a labret (Fig. 2:6) of andesite-basalt with the head slightly offset from the shaft and with a point that deviates several degrees from the center of the shaft. It seems to us that such labrets should have been worn two at a time in the upper or lower lip, at the center or at the corners of the lips.

The pin-shaped labrets of andesite-basalt and obsidian were worked by re-touch and are entirely covered by small negatives of spalls. Only one ground

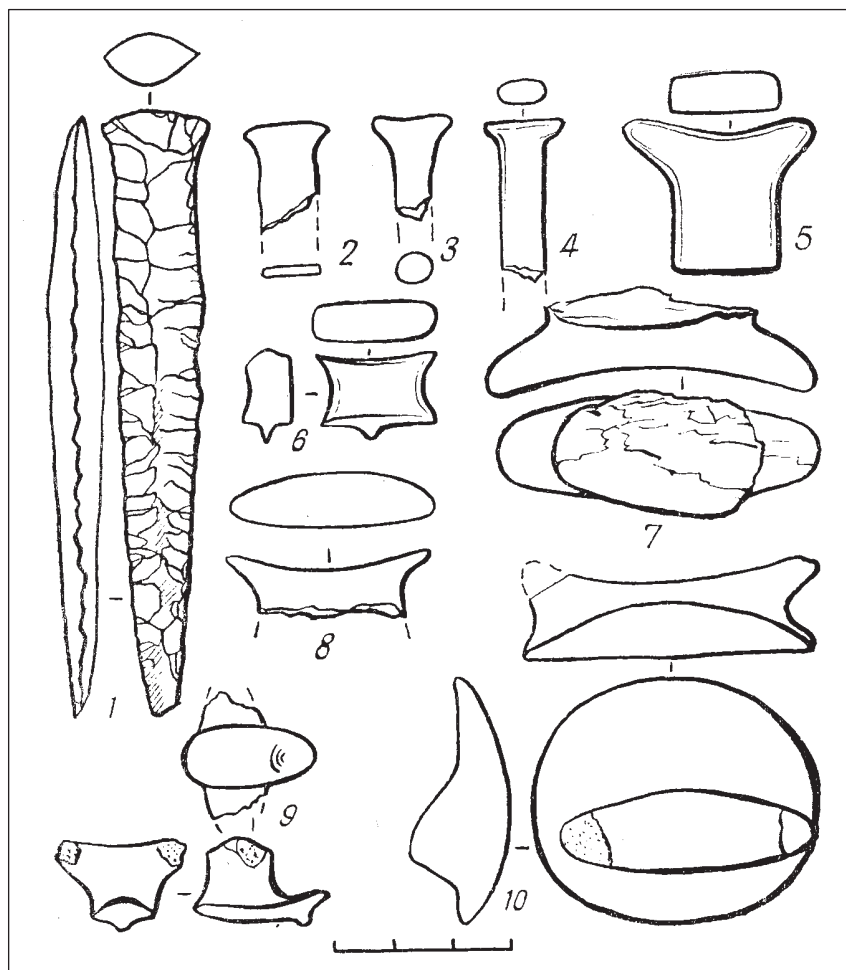


Figure 1.

labret is formed by retouch at the point of transition from the head to the shaft. Labrets of argillaceous slate (Figs. 2:7, 10, 12; 1:3), steatite (Fig. 1:4), and jasper-like stone (Fig. 2:1, 2-5; Fig. 1:2, 5) were carved and then prepared by grinding.

The third type of labret—hat-shaped—is represented by two specimens: the first artifact, made of walrus tusk (Fig. 1:7), was found in a shell midden on Cape Lopatka; the second, of animal bone (Fig. 1:8), was found in the second cultural layer of the Avacha site near Petropavlovsk-Kamchatski. In spite of the different sizes they are identical in form: the part of the labret head inside the lip is concave and repeats the curve of the jaw. The shaft is missing and thus the head, usually of large size, transforms directly into the decorative end.

Hat-shaped labrets are the original form of the fourth group—cuff link-shaped. They are most often asymmetrical and lack a shaft. The head, as a roundish curve, transforms directly into the decorative end, which is located outside the hole in the face. The simplest forms of cuff link-shaped labrets have been found in the Otkiyavik [Utkeavik?—*trans.*] and Ipiutak sites at Point Barrow (Ford 1959:221, 222, Fig. 108-e) and in the cultural deposits of the Nuklid [Nukleet?—*trans.*] site at Cape

Denbigh (Giddings 1964:Pl. 30: 27, 28). These are oval disks, up to 7.5 cm, connected by a partition. In our collection, this type of labret is somewhat different. Thus, the artifact of soft white stone has rather large dimensions, and the outer roundish part (4.6 x 4 cm) is slightly curved. The part inside the lip is comparatively narrow and is located above the center of the external disk (Fig. 1:10). The labret approaches right up to the chin cavity and covers the lower lip. In a photograph from the Domann album in Ratzel's book, a girl from a tribe of forest Indians in America is represented—Botocuda—with such a labret (Ratzel 1901:520).

The other artifact of this type was made of dark-brown slate and has a concave inside-the lip part and a flat oval outside, on the surface of which is an asymmetrically arranged slightly pulled (stretched) bump (Fig. 1:6). On the part inside the lip can be seen unsystematic, clearly not decorative transverse strokes—traces of contact with the teeth. The decorative element asymmetrically arranged on the plain—the bump—provides a basis for supposing that the ornament was worn in a pair. A labret of yellow-green jasper-like stone has small dimensions; the concave inside-the-lip part changes into a short neck, which is consummated by a beak-shaped decorative feature oval

in form with a small bump on its lower part. The ornament could have been worn in the middle of the upper or lower lip as one specimen or as a pair in the cheeks or corners of the lips.

It seems to us that labrets are tribal or clan signs similar to, for example, tattooing among African tribes and Indian tribes of America, as well as among the peoples of Northeast Asia. Therefore, we see such a variety of forms and types of these artifacts. Up to the beginning of the eighteenth century in Northeast Asia, labrets were widespread in tribes of the Eskimos and Aleuts (Lyapunova 1979:201–210). Recent investigations in southern Kamchatka have

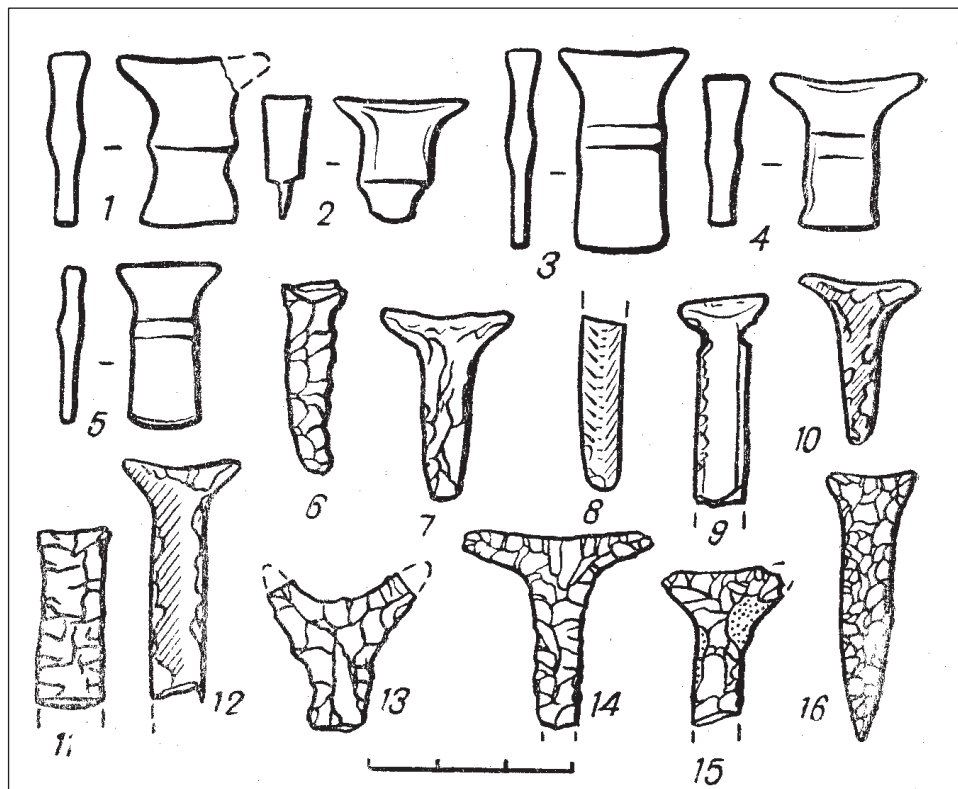


Figure 2.

provided rather striking material about the fact that the custom of wearing labrets has existed from the earliest times among tribes of the ancestors of the Itel'men, representatives of the stable so-called Tar'in culture, unchanged for thousands of years (Dikova 1977).

Labrets are known in the Kuril Islands (Shumshu Island, 1946), in southern Kamchatka (Cape Lopatka, 1975), at Yavino, in the vicinity of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatski (Tar'ya, Kirpichnoe, Avacha), on the middle course of the Kamchatka River (Ushki II, Ushki I), in the Aleutian Islands, in Alaska (the Choris culture, Point Hope, and others), among the Indians of northwestern America, and, finally, on the north coast of the Soviet Arctic as far as the Taimyr (Khlobystin 1969:217).

The chronology of these ornaments is interesting. The earliest labrets from Layer 6 of the Ushki I site are dated to $10,760 \pm 110$ (MAG-219) and $10,360 \pm 350$ (MAG-345) (Dikov 1977:244). The labret (Fig. 1:7) from Area III of Cape Lopatka, the southernmost point in Kamchatka, has an age of 4380 ± 70 (MAG-312) and 4210 ± 135 (MAG-317) (Shilo et al. 1977:180). In the Avacha site near

Petropavlovsk-Kamchatski, labrets were found primarily in the second cultural layer, the average age of which is 3450 ± 100 (MAG-310) (Shilo et al. 1977:181).

Thus, as male ornaments labrets have existed for a very long time, but at the beginning of the eighteenth century they disappeared from use and were forgotten. There is no mention of them in the reminiscences of eighteenth-century travelers. There is no information about labrets in Krasheninnikov (1949) or Lesseps (1801) in his detailed notes about Kamchatka. Information is lacking on the wearing of labrets by the ancestors of the Itel'men, by the Itel'men, and in the ethnographic literature (Starkova 1976).

I do not claim an exhaustive study of labrets—these are exceptionally distinctive, somewhat enigmatic, but not entirely convenient ornaments for residents of northern latitudes, which once existed in Kamchatka, including among the ancestors of the Itel'men. As work expands in this region our collection will increase, and consequently the information about labrets will increase.

“WINGED OBJECTS” FROM THE REGION OF THE YANGTZE RIVER⁵

Sergei V. Alkin

Any time an archaeologist is fortunate enough to find that still-mysterious piece with wings, like a butterfly, he has the desire to learn what it served for and what it meant.

—N. N. Dikov

Among those studying Chinese archaeology, there is the opinion that “China has everything.” In fact, in the huge territory of this country, owing to many factors of geographic, climatic, and historical character, over the extent of many millennia different archaeological cultures existed that initiated the formation of not just the titular Chinese nation of the Han. There are materials of the Neolithic Hemudu culture, sites of which were discovered almost three decades ago on the lower course of the Yangtze River. Describing this culture and its place in the quite complex system of Neolithic cultures of the southern part of Eastern China is not part of this venture, but the high level of its development should nevertheless be noted. The conditions of conducting archaeology on the eponymous Hemudu site, located at the mouth of the Yangtze River (121°22' east longitude, 29°58' north latitude), besides a typologically distinct collection of ceramic artifacts, preserved numerous items of bone and wood (Wang Renxiang and Yuan Jing 1978b). The remains of wooden structures permitted us to reconstruct the technology of erecting dwellings and the details of their interiors. The Hemudu culture was part of the realm of early cereal agriculture, based on the cultivation of rice. Massive finds of the remains of rice grains, straw, and husks (an area of about 400 m² was covered by a layer 20–50 cm thick) attests to the fact that rice was one of the basic sources of food. Hemudu, thus, was at the very beginning of the “rice road,” based on which the culture of rice cultivation spread from the lower reaches of the Yangtze to the Shandong Peninsula and Korea, so that in the fifth century BC it reached the Japanese archipelago. Analysis of the faunal remains gives evidence of, besides different species of wild animals, the early domestication of swine and possibly dogs (Wang Renxiang and Yuan

Jing 1978b). The characteristically high level of development of art should be noted: more than 70 variants of ceramic decoration, carving and engraving of elephant ivory, zoomorphic ceramic sculpture, and specimens of musical instruments (Wu Yuxian 1982). About 30 results of radio-carbon analysis date the Hemudu culture to the time of 5300–3500 BC (Chzhungo 1991:111–115).

With excavation of the settlement of Hemudu, a series of 13 items that received the name “*babochkovidnye izdeliya*” [butterfly-like artifacts] were found in layers belonging to the Hemudu culture proper (Wang Renxiang and Yuan Jing 1978a:53, 54, 62, 75). Various materials were used for making them. The morphological features are as follows: a flattened object of subtriangular outline and reminiscent in plan of a butterfly with a pair of open wings. In the medial part, on one of the surfaces, between two convex parallel ribs, a distinctive groove is formed. Also usually present are perforating holes: a pair at the base of the ribs (in the expanded part of the artifact) and one or two in the upper part of the artifact. On average, the artifacts are about 20 cm wide and 10 or more cm high. A striving toward a reduction of dimensions is noted on specimens of stone. The artifacts, as a rule, are symmetrical relative to the medial groove, though asymmetrical examples are also encountered. In several cases it can be said that the planes were formed as a pair of birds' heads, supporting which is the distribution of the decorative motif of the doubled birds' heads on many objects of graphic and sculpted art of the Hemudu culture.

Best preserved of all are four specimens (Fig. 1):

1. Stone. Width 11.3 cm, height 8 cm. Two ribs with cross pieces; at the base of one of them a perforating hole; another open hole on the edge of the upper part of the artifact between the ends of the facets. The groove between the ribs has a width of about 3 cm (Fig. 1:1).
2. Wood. Width 22.6 cm, height 13.6 cm. The wings were formed extremely symmetrically; in plan the

artifact is reminiscent of an isosceles triangle: two medial ribs with a groove with a width of about 4 cm between them. At the base of the object, perpendicular to longitudinal, adjoin two more ribs, located on the surface of the wings. A perforating transversely located hole was made through each of them (Fig. 1:3).

3. Wood. Width 23 cm, height 13.4 cm. Of asymmetrical form; one wing was executed in a kind of pentahedron, and the second was formed as a kind of bird's head. It is hard to say whether this was the initial form or the artifact was

trimmed after a break. The groove between the insignificantly pronounced ribs has a width of about 4 cm. There are no holes for attachment, but a special projection is present at the base, and on the opposite side there is a thickening in the form of a longitudinal ridge—a distinctive negative of the groove (Fig. 1:4).

4. A plate of elephant ivory. Width 18.8 cm, height 10 cm. The artifact was broken along the midline. A groove was initially chosen for it. Projecting edges/ribs are absent. A curled cutout was made on each wing. The whole artifact, in the opinion of Chinese researchers (Wang Renxiang and Yuan Jing 1984), is reminiscent of an image of double birds' heads. A tracing of the artifact allows us to see an en face image of the head of an elephant with tusks, to which the materials used also indirectly point. However, we note that other images of an elephant are not known in the culture. There is also a pair of symmetrical half-opened holes at the upper edge (Fig. 1:2).

The Hemudu “butterfly-like artifacts” are very similar to Bering Sea “winged objects.” Among the general structural features are a pair of “wings” and a contrivance in the medial part for the attachment of a shaft in combination with additional holes for its firm attachment. But in contrast to the closed groove of the Bering Sea objects, the Hemudu specimens have a distinctive open channel for setting a handle. Another difference is in the ornamentation: the complex design of the Bering Sea objects and the smooth, polished surfaces of the Hemudu

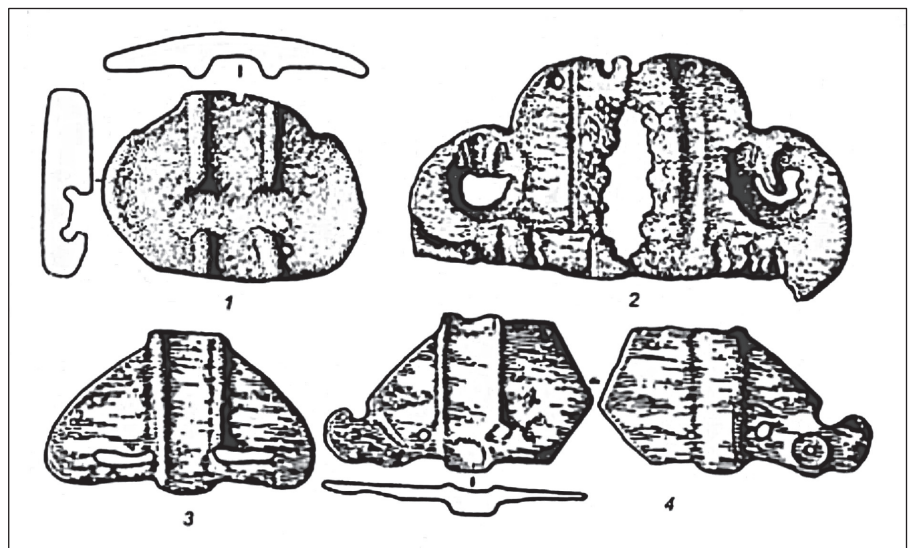


Figure 1. “Butterfly-like artifacts” from the settlement of Hemudu. Drawings were executed based on sketches and photographs (Wang Renxiang and Yuan Jing 1978a; Wang Renxiang and Yuan Jing 1984). Not to scale.

“winged objects.” In paradoxical fashion, the clean surfaces of the latter could play a role in the missing “early specimens of winged objects” (Arutyunov and Sergeev 1969:109). In connection with this it is desirable to find out what brought about the analogy between “winged objects” and “butterfly-like artifacts”: relation through kinship or convergence.

The assignment of the described objects, which have no analogues in any culture in this part of Asia, has long been a mystery to Chinese colleagues. Ten years after the first finds, the archaeologists Wang Renxiang and Yuan Jing proposed a variant of their possible use, which was based on the similarity of “butterfly-like artifacts” and “winged objects” from the Bering Sea zone (Wang Renxiang and Yuan Jing 1984).

We note that a significant number of Neolithic “butterfly-like artifacts” occur in one archaeological site. Concerning “winged objects,” their total number in archaeological sites of the Old Eskimo cultures from the mid-1980s to present increased from about 70 (Pitul’ko 1995:116) to more than 100 (Gusev 1997:63).

N.N. Dikov was the first to record, in the closed complexes of the Uelen, Enmynytyn, and Chini cemeteries, a stable “winged object” complex (shaft)—the head of a toggling harpoon, which supported the well-known hypothesis of H. Collins that “winged objects” were part of the equipment of a throwing harpoon, a weight and stabilizer. The researcher simultaneously expressed the assumption of their high degree of sacredness and possible

use with appropriate rituals (Dikov 1969:130, 196–201). There is analogy to the latter in the form of jasper tops of wands (*gekudze*) in the early stage of the Kofun period in Japan, which had a form similar to “winged objects” (Chan Su Bu 1988:125, 126). I believe that it should be concluded that the Hemudu specimens also were poly-functional. On the one hand, it is possible to acknowledge the reconstruction, developed by Chinese researchers, as being correct (Fig. 2). On the other, it is impossible not to note the zoomorphic nature of the “butterfly-like artifacts.” Examination of this question (especially analy-

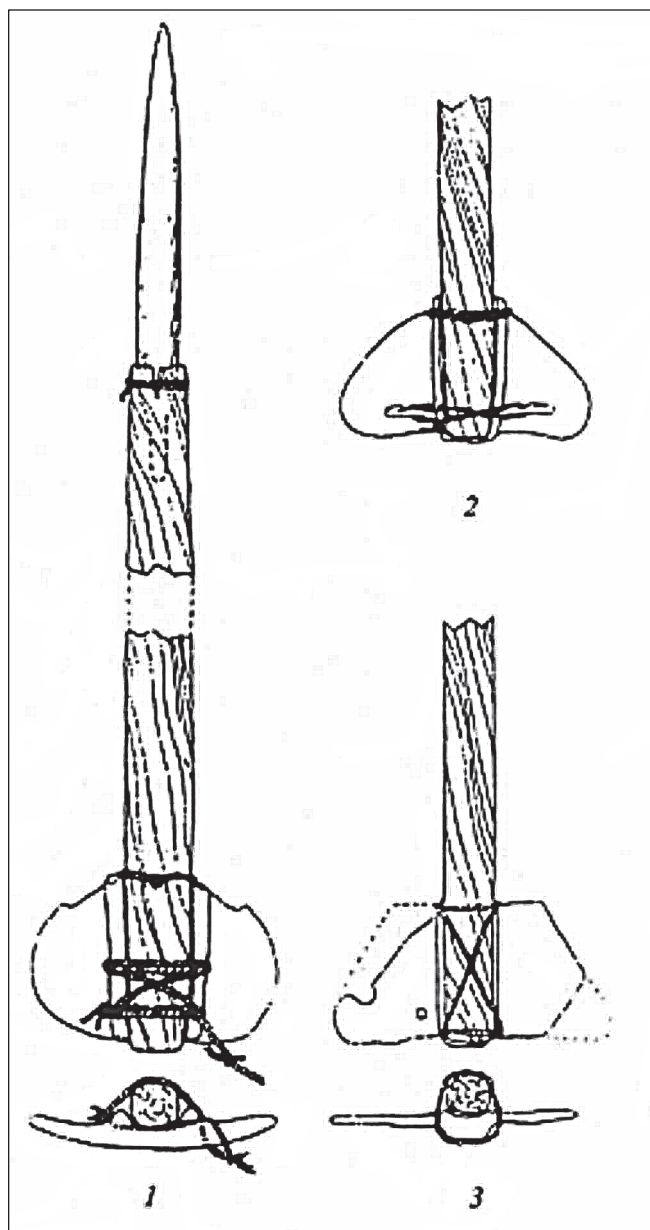


Figure 2. Reconstruction of the use of “butterfly-like artifacts” from the settlement of Hemudu (Wang Renxiang and Yuan Jing 1978).

sis of the semantics of the forms of a butterfly and a bird) permits returning to the question of southern sources for Old Eskimo art, which S.I. Rudenko (1947) and A.P. Okladnikov (1951) wrote about earlier. In terms of content, bird subjects, widespread in the folklore of the peoples of East Asia, find their earliest embodiment in the archaeological materials of the regions of Southeast and East Asia and especially gravitate toward the Pacific coast. And the Hemudu culture demonstrates the most ancient forms of them. Concerning the form of the butterfly, it should be perceived in terms of the common Asian idea of making insects sacred. There are also many parallels connected with Neolithic and later cultures of East Asia, including its southernmost regions (Alkin 1998:53–56). In Old Eskimo art, not just style but also some images point directly to a southern direction of connection (Arutyunov and Sergeev 1975:153).

For researchers of the ancient peoples of East Asia, long-ago connections are no secret, connections that existed between the Paleo-Asiatics of the Far East and the Tungus-Manchurians, whose ancestral home many modern researchers consider the continental regions of Northeast China. These contacts are traced in the material culture, language, and folklore (Khasanova 1985:153). At our disposal are materials that attest to the fact that the connections of the earliest Paleo-Asiatics could extend even farther to the south (Alkin 1996:8–10; Chikisheva and Shpakova 1995:34–36). The matter, of course, cannot presently be about direct use of the extremely distant in time and space materials of the Hemudu culture in the analysis of problems of cultural genesis of the Asiatic Eskimos. But it seems to me that the inclusion of a series of “winged objects” from the lower reaches of the Yangtze River in the real context of connection in the East Asian meridional arc of correspondences opens up some prospects.

NOTES

1. This article was originally published as N. N. Dikov, “Chegitunskie drevneeskimosskie mogil’niki,” *Kraevedcheskie zapiski* 6(1966):125–131.
2. This article was originally published as “Древности Сешана,” *Краеведческие записки* 6(1966):155–160.
3. This article was originally published in *The Most Recent Data on the Archaeology of the Northern Far East (Materials of the Northeast-Asian Interdisciplinary Ar-*

chaeological Expedition) (Academy of Sciences of the USSR, Far Eastern Science Center, Northeastern Interdisciplinary Science Research Institute, Magadan, 1980), 56–61.

4. Cape Dezhneva on the Chukchi Peninsula, which projects into Bering Strait, is sometimes referred to as “*Chukotskii Nos*” (Chukchi Nose) or simple *Nos* (the Nose). However, I will defer to the author.—*Trans.*
5. This article was originally published as “‘Krylatye predmety’ iz raiona r. Yantszy,” *Historic Readings: Proceedings of the Scientific-Practical Conference Devoted to the 75th Birthday of Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences N.N. Dikov* (Magadan: Russian Academy of Sciences, Far East Branch, Northeast Science Center, Northeast Interdisciplinary Science Research Institute, 2001), 123–130.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In preparing this material, I was given support by I. E. Vorobei, to whom I express genuine gratitude for aid and consultation.

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