

PALEOENVIRONMENT. THE STONE AGE

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES ON THE ANGARA BANK
FROM THE CHADOBETS RIVER TO BOGUCHANY:
FINDINGS OF A SURVEY***

The Angara River separates major historical and geographic regions of Siberia—the Cis-Baikal area and the Yenisei drainage. Its banks were subjected to detailed archaeological surveys whose findings were integrated into cultural and chronological models. Because most of the Angara has become part of a system of artificial reservoirs, we are unable to test these models using new planigraphic and stratigraphic information concerning all the riverside archaeological sites. In 2014, we carried out an in-depth archaeological survey of a 115-kilometer stretch of the northern Angara bank between the Boguchany Dam and the village of Boguchany. Survey results were supplemented by archival data. The ancient habitation layer was found to extend over a large area of the Angara terrace. Artifacts have tended to accumulate in weakly stratified parts of the subaerial complex. Known archaeological sites span the period from the Neolithic to the Late Iron Age.

Keywords: Northern Angara region, southern taiga, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Early Iron Age, Late Iron Age, archaeological sites, stratigraphy.

Introduction

The riverside of the Angara River, the largest watercourse connecting Baikalian Siberia and the Yenisei River drainage, is of exceptional importance for studying the processes associated with the genesis of the cultures of taiga and adjacent areas of North Asia. The river and the forests on its banks are a rich source of vitally important resources. This fact, and the significance of the river as a means of

transportation, have determined a long and colorful history for the populating of it, which can be considered indicative for a taiga zone associated with the large watercourse.

Archaeological sites are the only source of information about the history of Angara people until the time when the region was included into the document-flow system of the Russian Empire in the 17th century. A target study of the Angara archaeology began in late 19th century, and was associated with the name of V.I. Vitkovsky, who discovered and investigated a number of sites and introduced the system of comparison of materials derived from different locations. In the 20th century, large-scale surveys in the

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Angara River drainage were carried out under the projects for inundation of its banks with waters supplied by a system of reservoirs that occupy to date the largest part of the river channel. Primary research was conducted by A.P. Okladnikov and scientists from academic institutions of Leningrad and Novosibirsk, and also from Irkutsk and Krasnoyarsk pedagogical universities and a Krasnoyarsk museum. Thus, the volume of archaeological data, which is difficult to calculate, about the Angara banks within the area of Irkutsk, Bratsk, and Ust-Ilim reservoirs was partly obtained. The most extensive study focused on archaeology of the Northern Angara region was carried out by the Boguchany archaeological expedition of IAE SB RAS in 2008–2012. The fieldwork resulted in a vast array of archaeological evidence obtained for the largest taiga region (Boguchanskaya..., 2014). The rigorous study of it is still ongoing. Validation and verification of theoretical concepts that emerged during the works of the expedition require research procedures in the remaining stretches of the Angara.

A risk factor such as flood-inundation of sites by artificial reservoirs remains an important determinant associated with the archaeological study of the Angara banks. Specifically, the construction of the Nizhneboguchanskaya Dam is planned, and its power site will likely be located near the Kosaya riffle. It is expected that the normal impounded water-level will reach as high as 140 m (GES na Nizhnei Angare, 2013). The experience of building a series of hydroelectric stations on the Angara reveals the complexity of the issue regarding the reservoir impoundment. It requires an integrated approach of government and business institutions, and should be based on scientific substantiation of the efficiency of the area. Comprehensive study of the archaeological evidence appears to be the only way to preserve data on the ancient history of the large region.

The situation described entailed the undertaking of a thorough survey of the area which is projected to be the reservoir bed of the Nizhneboguchanskaya Dam. The survey area, administratively belonging to the Kezhemsky and Boguchansky districts of the Krasnoyarsk Territory, included a stretch between the Boguchany Dam and the village of Boguchany. The survey was preceded by the collection of archival and cartographic data, and by identification of areas containing potential archaeological sites. The survey was conducted on foot (with relocations between work sites by river and road transport), and involved visual inspection of the area and cutting trenches.

Archaeological evidence from the area under study

Field investigations were carried out at a 115-kilometer stretch of the Angara bank, extending from the

Boguchany Dam to the village of Boguchany (Fig. 1). This area is associated with the Angara Plateau and partly with the Central Siberian Plateau; its elevation varies considerably from 110 m to 150 m. The waterline ranges from 138 m in the area near the island of Chelbikhin to 123 m near the Ovsyanka riffle. The region is densely forested (mainly with pine trees, and also with larch, spruce, birch, cedar, and aspen). The survey area encompasses several large islands, with Sosnovy Island having the highest point among them (located in front of the Bolshaya Imbala River mouth), and also includes the mouths of large tributaries of the Angara (Chadobets and Mura rivers), and a number of relatively small inflows. Here the Angara River channel is traversed by rocky outcrops (Bryanskaya riffle, Mursky rapid, riffles of Murskaya, Golvyatinskiye kamni, Kosaya, Ovsyanka). Rather large settlements, such as the villages of Zaldevo, Tagara, Chadobets, Klimino, Syromolotovo (Kezhemsky District), Govorkovo, Khrebtovy, Nevonka, Shiversky, and Krasnogorievsky (Boguchansky District), are located on the surveyed Angara banks. Non-residential or seasonal settlements (the villages of Pashutino, Goltyavino, and Zaimka (Boguchansky District)) are known as well.

The production of criteria for establishing boundaries of archaeological sites on the Angara banks in the middle and lower reaches requires a modern understanding of occupational stratification in the area. The river banks appear to have been inhabited for a long period of time. Seasonal sites and relatively long-term settlements occur on all terraces and various platforms. However, the distribution and concentration of the cultural layer reveal its highly irregular nature. It often becomes fundamentally important to estimate the situation of the landscape and topography in order to identify the boundaries of an archaeological site. The topsoil that has a relatively homogeneous archaeological content may extend for a few kilometers of a single continuous Angara terrace. This is attested by the invariable nature of the terrace surface, the occurrence of soil deposits, and artifacts in exposures and trenches.

In the survey area, a total of 17 sites added to the State Heritage Register was known. Publications provide information about archaeological evidence found outside the registered sites (Vasilievsky, Burilov, Drozdov, 1988; Senotrusova, 2013; and others). The most comprehensive data on the archaeological sites of the lower Angara are provided by N.I. Drozdov, V.I. Makulov, and A.V. Ermolaev (1989). According to the records, literature and field data, plus verbal information*, the following sites are known on the right

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