

PERSONALIA

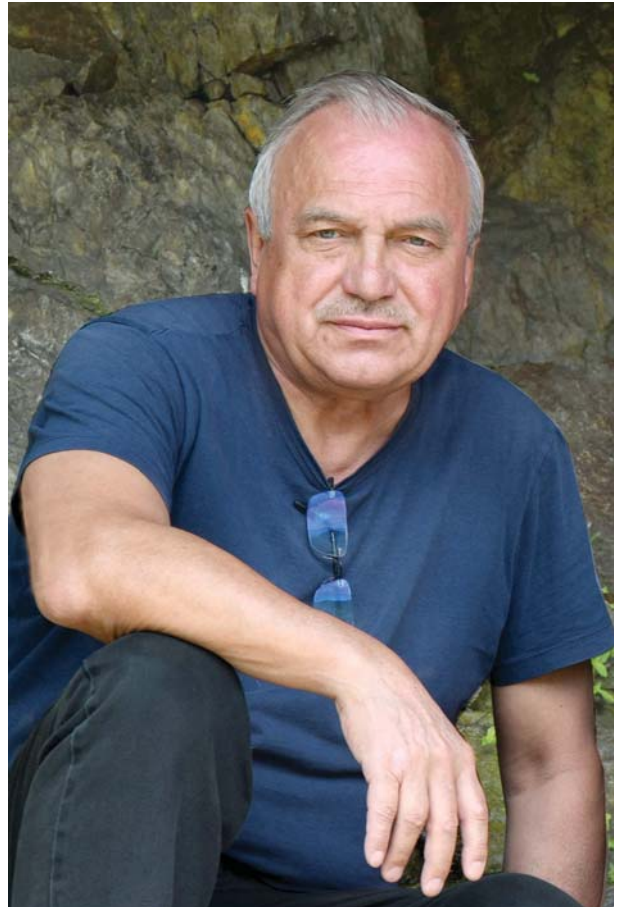
To the 65th Birthday of Mikhail Vasilievich Shunkov

On May 24, 2018, Mikhail Vasilievich Shunkov, the Director of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of SB RAS, the Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Historical Sciences, and Professor at the Department of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Institute for the Humanities at the Novosibirsk State University, turned 65.

Mikhail Shunkov was born in Irkutsk in the family of old dwellers of Siberia. His father Vasily Maksimovich, the decorated veteran of the Second World War, was a multi-talented person, an academic economist, and one of the most authoritative representatives of the Siberian school of game management. In the beginning of war, the mother of Mikhail Shunkov, Nadezhda Vladimirovna, graduated with distinction from the Department of World Literature of the famous Moscow Institute of Philosophy, Literature, and History, and taught foreign literature in Irkutsk State University. As a theater-lover and theater researcher, well-known in Irkutsk, she wrote vivid reviews of performances staged in Irkutsk theaters. At the university, Nadezhda Shunkova was remembered as a brilliant lecturer and very strict professor, who loved her subject endlessly. She passed this love and knowledge to her children and numerous students. Nadezhda Shunkova has brought up several generations of teachers, philology scientists, and writers. Writer V.G. Rasputin and playwright A.V. Vampilov were among her students.

Both of their sons have inherited the giftedness, independence, and balance of actions and thoughts from their father Vasily, and profound education and perfectionism towards herself and others from their mother Nadezhda. Boris, the older brother of Mikhail Shunkov, graduated from the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography, and was a well-known camera operator, scriptwriter, and director of documentary films. Boris Shunkov left a bright mark on Siberian documentary filmmaking. His piercingly sincere works have been awarded many times at international film festivals in Poland, Germany, France, and Spain.

Mikhail Shunkov was brought up in the intellectual creative atmosphere of the “old Irkutsk”, and since his young years, he has become interested in studying ancient history. After graduating high school in 1971, Mikhail Shunkov enrolled in the Department of History



at the Irkutsk State University. His first archaeological expedition was directed by Mikhail Aksenov, a prominent representative of the Irkutsk archaeological school. Participation in research of the sites, which are currently considered the classic Paleolithic objects of the Baikal Siberia, determined the choice of the scholarly specialization for Mikhail Shunkov—the earliest stages of human formation.

After graduating university with distinction in 1976, Mikhail Shunkov was sent by the state to work in the Tomsk State University, where he was promoted to the position of Junior Researcher at the Basic Research Laboratory of History, Archaeology, and Ethnography of Siberia. Two years later, the motivated young scholar entered the postgraduate training program at the Leningrad Branch of the Institute of Archaeology, where

his supervisor became Vasily Lyubin, an outstanding scholar, one of the greatest specialists in Paleolithic studies. During this period, Mikhail Shunkov was fortunate to have an internship in the Caucasian and Kostenki Paleolithic expeditions, obtain invaluable scholarly experience, and gain many friends among archaeologists of his generation from the Moscow and Leningrad archaeological centers, most of whom were to become outstanding researchers.

In 1987, young talented archaeologist was noticed by Academician Anatoly Derevianko, who invited him to work in the Institute of History, Philology, and Philosophy of the Siberian Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences. New stage in Mikhail Shunkov's biography, associated with the study of the Stone Age of the Altai, started in the Novosibirsk Scientific Center. After successful defense of his candidate dissertation entitled "Mousterian Sites of the Intermountain Depressions of the Central Altai" (supervised by Vasily Lyubin) in 1990, Mikhail Shunkov was confirmed in the position of Senior Researcher, in which he worked before defending his doctoral dissertation "Archaeology and Paleogeography of the Paleolithic of the Northwestern Altai" in 2001. A year later, he became a Chief Researcher and the Deputy Director for Research; and in 2015, he was elected the Director by the team of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of SB RAS.

Mikhail Shunkov acquired his first experience in organizing scholarly research in 1987–1988, when he became the Head of the Middle Yenisei Archaeological Team. Since 1989, he has been the Head of the Altai Archaeological Team, which focuses on comprehensive study of multilayered Paleolithic sites in the northwest of the Altai Mountains. Thanks to these studies, these sites have gained worldwide recognition. Since 1990, Mikhail Shunkov has been in charge of the largest in Russia Archaeological Research Station "Denisova Cave" in the Altai, where comprehensive studies of the most informative Paleolithic sites of Siberia have been conducted.

Mikhail Shunkov combines active field research with serious analytical work. He is the author and co-author of eleven monographs and over four hundred and fifty articles on the most important issues of ancient history of North Asia. A part of his works has been published in academic journals *Nature* and *Science*. The priority areas of scholarly research by Mikhail Shunkov include the key issues of human settlement in Northern Eurasia, such as the formation and development of the earliest cultural traditions, chronostratigraphy and correlation of Paleolithic cultures, Pleistocene paleogeography, reconstruction of natural and climatic environment

of ancient populations, and the influence of natural environment on the subsistence strategies of ancient humans.

A number of Paleolithic sites have been studied and are being under research led by Mikhail Shunkov. Outstanding discoveries have been made using materials from these sites. They include the Lower Paleolithic site of Karama, earliest in Northern and Central Asia, whose finds testify to the appearance of the first humans in the territory of Southern Siberia ca 800 ka BP. The multilayered geoarchaeological sites of Denisova Cave, Ust-Karakol, and others are the most informative on the territory of Siberia. Interdisciplinary research of these sites made it possible to restore the chronicle of gradual evolution of the prehistoric humans and their culture in North Asia, and also to make a detailed reconstruction of the natural complex of the Pleistocene in this region, which existed during the last 300,000 years.

One of the main areas of scholarly activities of Mikhail Shunkov in recent years is research of the problem of anthropogenesis. It resulted in the discovery of a new form of fossil hominins, which was called *Homo altaiensis*, or Denisovan, after the site of their discovery, in Denisova Cave, in the Altai. The DNA sequencing of the Denisovan hominin has been recognized by the world community as the second most important scientific discovery of 2012, after the Higgs boson problem.

Mikhail Shunkov pays great attention to pedagogical work and training of highly qualified specialists. From 1976 to 1989, he directed archaeological practical training of students from the Departments of History at the Tomsk State University and the Krasnoyarsk State Pedagogical Institute; and since 2000 until presently, he has been supervising field practical training of students from the Department for the Humanities at the Novosibirsk State University. Thanks to his enthusiasm and talent, and not only as a lecturer who teaches the course "Paleoecology of Man", but also as great storyteller of adventures from expeditions, many first-year students were fascinated with archaeology. Subsequently, Mikhail Shunkov became the scholarly supervisor of their student works. A whole number of young scholars prepared and successfully defended dissertations under his supervision.

Mikhail Shunkov carries out a great deal of administrative and organizational work. He has been heading the projects of the Russian Foundation for the Humanities, the Russian Foundation for Basic Research, and the Presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences. For many years, Mikhail Shunkov was a member of the Expert Council of the Russian Foundation for the Humanities in History, Archaeology, and Ethnography.

He is an expert of the Russian Science Foundation and the Russian Foundation for Basic Research in the field of Human and Social Sciences. Mikhail Shunkov is a member of the Editorial Board of the journal *Archaeology, Ethnology and Anthropology of Eurasia*, the Head of the Department of Archaeology of the Stone Age in the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of SB RAS, and a member of the Research and Dissertation Council in the same Institute. He is a regular member of the organizing committees of academic events at international and all-Russian levels.

Mikhail Shunkov has spent dozens of field seasons on the expanses of Eurasia, and has made many important discoveries and achievements, but he is still full of new creative plans and aspirations, since there are no limits in scholarship. We wish him good health, best of luck, great success, and prosperity!

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