(2) Our investigation is dedicated to the one of the important elements of the material culture of the peoples of the North of Asia, in particular, the forest zone of the North of Western Siberia – different types of wicker containers, boxes, baskets. It is believed that the ancient man learned how to make wicker ware much earlier than mastered pottery-making. Peoples living on different continents, could have significant differences both in technology and in form of the wickerware. Nowadays in everyday life of the peoples of the North of Siberia there is no such a thing. But according to archaeological data, wickerwork from flat stripes are known to the indigenous peoples of the North of Siberia at least from the 1st century BC and existed until the 17th century. Wickerwork of the peoples of Northern Asia is a specific and very small group of objects decorated with an unusual - a rare type of ornamentation. We will present our version of the origins of this type of ornament and the reasons for its disappearance.

The female needlework is one of the most conservative spheres of human activity, information about technologies, techniques was passed on by women from generation to generation and has remained unchanged for centuries, and the basic ornaments preserved unchanged even when they were transferred to other materials. (3) These are the archaeological sites we are going to talk about and their analogies in Asia but it s not now.

In the soils of the North of Siberia, the situation when organic materials are preserved in a good condition are extremely rare, there should be, for example, a frozen cultural layer. We have some, mainly, of Middle Ages and they show a certain continuity of traditions. In the archaeological materials of the middle and northern taiga of the 13th -18th centuries that we have a group of boxes for sewing accessories with wicker ornaments. So it’s the main group and the most recent one, because since the beginning of the 18th century, wicker ornaments have completely disappeared from material culture.

Wicker goods with bicolour ornamentation from the stripes of tree bark or grass were common for the traditional culture of the North Asia even earlier than the 13th century, but there are very few such facts. In one of the burials of the Nakhodka Bay archaeological site there a woman was laid on a wicker mat. Only a small fragment has been preserved, the mat was made from strips of birch bark of 0.8 cm, and the mat was only under the body - at the bottom of the burial, its size was probably within 50 sm by 1m.3 sm no bigger than the grave pit itself. (4) Also wicker ornament was found in the Ust-Poluy culture of the Iron Age (IV century BC - II century AD), localized in the Yamal-Nenets autonomous okrug, on the Yamal Peninsula. These are the earliest examples of wicker ornamentation.

Later boxes, not just some pieces of wickerwork were made using iron sewing needles up to 5 cm in length. The basis was made from a rectangular piece of birch bark, the dark side was inwards. The edges were put on each other and sewed together. There were two types of ornamentation - scratched ones or wicker ones, imposed on the birch. Wicker ornaments were made of birch bark, bast or grass. They are much less common than scratched ornaments. The earliest box with wicker ornament on it was found in burial No. 31 of the Saygatinsky III burial site of the Khanty population of the 13th-14th centuries. It was a women burial and the wicker-box was near needle-cases and needles. The lid of the box was also filled with rectangular figures. The remains of wickerwork is that dark thing on the walls. This find allows us to identify the functional purpose of some of such wicker boxes as the boxes for sewing supplies.

(5) The most numerous example of wicker ornaments is a group of boxes from Nadymsky gorodok in the delta of the Nadym River in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug a defensive-residential complex of the 13th - first third of the 18th centuries, where we can clearly distinguish trade, residental and ritual religious areas. In the collection of more than 15 000 artifacts, representing about 250 categories. The population of the Nadymsky gorodok was polyethnic, the population was divided into several groups with different status. There lived the ancestors of modern Khanty, tundra and forest Nenets. Women sewing accessories were stored in special leather bags or birch bark boxes. (6) In Nadymsky gorodok there were about 10 boxes found dated from the 13th to 17th centuries. Such wicker boxes for needlework were round and square. These are three fragments of small boxes with a wall up to 8 cm, on which an ornament of thin birch bark strips of two colors, forming alternating rhombuses. was sewn (7) In Nadymsky gorodok with the same ornament were decorated two large trays for storage of bird-cherry, that was used for medicine.

(8) A series of fragments that were found made it possible to determine that the shape and the size of the boxes for sewing supplies were stable for at least 500 years, the proportions remained unchanged, from 8 by16 cm to 10 by20 cm. (9) Judging by the Nadymsky gorodok, wicker ornaments disappear in the first half of 18th century with the beginning of Christianization with the arrival of Russians. (10) (11) – (15) Here are more examples of Nadymsky gorodor wicker work.

Other Khanty ornaments scratched on birch bark are almost usually geometric, were scratched on the back side of the bark, which has a dark brown or reddish-brown color; the images themselves were light-beige (yellow); so the main principle was the creation of a two-color image. What is the reason for such stability of the geometric ornament, because scratching allows you to make two-tone images of any style and any form, geometric shapes are not an adaptation of drawings for a material, because (16) there is an example is the women's sheath from Nadymsky gorodok, decorated with geometric ornament on one side, and with vegetative on the other. We think that the reason for the stability of this type of ornamentation for a long time seems to us, first of all, in transferring of more ancient ornaments formed on a different material, for example, wicker grass, to a new material. What I mean is (17) - The same geometric compositions were found in the Poluisky gorodok of the end of the 16th-17th century, the residence of the leaders of the Obdorsk principality. Similar geometric ornament on different materials is a stable tradition, it is based on wicker ornaments.

(18) Nowadays the technology of two-color wicker decoration, not only of the household, but up to walls of houses themselves, is one of the characteristic features of many peoples of Southeast Asia. We can state that, at least from the 1st century BC and up to the 17th century the peoples of the Far North had different items of house ware with ornaments made in technology and color completely identical to the ones that are known from Southeast Asia. So, for example, the analogies of the traditional ornaments of Northern Siberia that we cited can be found in the materials of Vietnam and South China, which makes it possible to draw a cautious conclusion that there are some objects and ornaments that unite all the peoples of Asia from the Sea of ​​Okhotsk to South China (from Sakhalin and Hokkaido to Kalimantan), these are are several variants of geometric ornaments absolutely identical.

For example, the ornaments of the Nadymsky gorodok that we talked about are exactly the same as the ornaments of the south of East Asia on the details of the weaving loom of Li nationality of Hainan island where we worked this spring (19) – the belts for stretching a hand loom that have a clear gender identity (20). This ornamentation is stable for Li and common for them and reproduced by all women. In the ethnographic village of the Li and Miao people on Hainan island, all the hand loom belts have this ornamentation, which means that the ornament on the belt is ethno-determining and certainly has a semantic meaning (21), perhaps in this case a specific solar symbolism - a sign of the sky in the sign of the earth. Moreover, these belts, always decorated with the same ornament, (22) are often not even visible under clothing, therefore, perhaps, the ornaments have some kind of semantic function, in (23) Li language, they say it is a "kapeng" - "protection belt". Maybe, a kind of confirmation of the protection function of this ornament, because we have found this ornament on also on Li hunting bags and on Li houses (24). So this is the question we wanted to discuss with all the scientific community. In Vietnam, in the ethnographic museum, such an ornament is found both on the needlework cases, and on walls of houses, on shutters, which, perhaps, can also have a protective function. (25) Similar decoration of walls are common for the Ainu. (26) A shoulder box from Borneo (Kalimantan) is also interesting in this case, this ornament decorates only one side of the box, directly adjacent to the man’s back. We can name not only this ornament but also another quite similar (27 -32)

(33) So, speaking again about the northern peoples of Siberia - for us, these ornaments are interesting in the context of the formation and resettlement of the ancestors of the peoples of Northern Eurasia. Scientists attribute these migration processes to the Upper Paleolithic, the early Neolithic, when the climatic changes caused by the global warming of the Atlantic climatic period opened the way to the north for the inhabitants of southern territories. The early Neolithic of Eurasia is indeed characterized by an increased mobility of the population in comparison with the Upper Paleolithic. And it is obvious that a man of the modern type did not form on the territory of Northern Eurasia, but then where were the initial migration points? Science does not yet have an answer to this question. According to paleoecologists, in the early Neolithic the middle and polar Ural was characterized by deciduous forests and a climate that allowed a man to settle down and stay in this region. Adapting to new conditions changed the traditions of the ancient tribes, as we saw yesterday but there were conservative areas of human life, where traditions were stronger than any of the adaptive processes and remained unchanged for thousands of years. Is it possible to find such stable markers that can indicate the resettlement of an ancient human, that preserve their original meaning? After all, science knows such examples when, with the change of generations, with appearing of new technologies, only the material from of the objects changed, but their semantic component remained unchanged. Here I mean the needle cases from the diaphysis of the tubular bird bones (34). Both epiphyses were cut off in order to make hollow tubes with rather thin walls. Such bone needlecases appear in the Paleolithic and they have existed for a long time in many cultures from the Stone Age. In the Metal Age along with the ones made of bones, metal needle cases appear and they are exactly similar in shape and size to those that were made of hollow bird bones.(35) they are even in modern ethnography.

For Asian cultures, the tradition of weaving, making of wicker ornaments out of organic materials, is a characteristic feature up to the present day, but in the north the tradition gradually degraded and only some of its elements remained in conservative spheres, for example, in ritual needlework, but when Russians appeared in West Siberia, they changed a lot the spiritual culture. The exploration of Siberia and the beginning of Russian colonization led to a further loss of the cultural identity and to the spreading of Russian culture influence. (36) Wicker ornaments dissapear as rudiments of traditional culture with the development of technology. But perhaps the wicker ornaments which are so typical for the easren Asia are the examples of some common cultural basis and can point out the connections between ancient population of the south and north of Asia. This report is not a strict conclusion it's a kind of topic for the discussion.