

## Sikhote-Alin (Russian Federation)

No 766rev

### Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	Natural complex «Central Sikhote-Alin»
<i>Location</i>	Ternejski, Krasnoarmejski, Dalnegorski, and Pozharski Districts, Primorski Region
<i>State Party</i>	Russian Federation
<i>Date</i>	27 June 2000

### Justification by State Party

Archaeological monuments include late Palaeolithic sites with material analogues on Hokkaido Island (Japan), a reminder that, as with the natural history, the property occupies a key location in the study of the interface between Eurasia and further east including, ultimately, North America. Bronze Age and medieval sites also exist on the property.

The traditions, language, and material culture of the present-day Udege and their ancestors have been preserved and are respected. Special words are in use for various types of building: for example, *kumirmi* used as both birthing huts and mortuaries. Traditional clothes are retained for ceremonies, festivals, and ritual occasions.

### Notes

i The dossier specifies no criteria under which this nomination is proposed: the most appropriate cultural criteria, should the nomination be approved, would appear to be iii and v (and only those two on present evidence).

ii This property is nominated as a *mixed site* under both natural and cultural criteria. IUCN will provide a complementary evaluation of the natural qualities.

iii In 1996 a nomination of this property for World Heritage status was deferred by the Bureau on the grounds that the boundary of the nomination was not justified, that a legal basis was provided for only 14% of the nominated area, and that the Regional Government wished to be involved in a revised nomination. The last of those conditions has been met and the second one may have been, but the nomination contains no statement specifically on this matter.

### Category of property

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this

is a *site*. It should also be considered a *cultural landscape*, as defined in paragraph 39 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.

### History and Description

#### History

People were active in the area in prehistoric times. In the 7th century AD arrivals from Zabaikalie created a new Tungus-language society, the Mukri, who developed under Mongol and Turkish influence. In the mid-19th century, the Ussuri region became part of Russia, and thereafter various "Western" influences affected local culture to some degree. Despite the remoteness, traditional clothing materials, for example, were replaced by woven cloths in the 19th century for everyday use. About 1900 Chinese migrants brought with them naive Taoism to mix with Udege paganism. A further addition was given to local culture by the arrival of Russian Old Believers, devout ultra-orthodox Christians fleeing persecution and seeking refuge in the remote valleys and mountains that were the hunting and collecting territories of the indigenous peoples.

The process of collectivization reached even as far east as Central Sikhote-Alin. In the later 1930s the population in the nominated area was brought together in just two settlements, one of which, Krasny Yar, continues as the main settlement today. In 1993, the Sikhote-Alin Ethnic territory was formalized around the concept of man in relation to the taiga (pine forest) environment, itself representative of the principle, admirably expressed by the nomination, of "the reasonable and sparing use of the nature resources," so characteristic of the indigenous peoples of this area in former times as well as the present. The continuance of the indigenous way of life is now, however, under severe threat, both because of the small size of the population (c 2000) and from external influence.

#### Description

The nominated property lies on the eastern coast of Asia between extreme north-eastern China and the Sea of Japan. The total area of the nomination is 1,549,179ha, made up of five blocks of land. Only 2000 people live within it, a low number even by Siberian standards of population density. It is a unique region with locally dominant woodland such as virgin, broad-leaved Korean pine forests on either side of the Bikim valley to the north-west and, to the south in the Sikhote-Alin Nature Reserve and along the coast, discrete areas of larch and Japanese oak. Overall, the environment is remarkably stable and unpolluted.

Reference is made in the nomination dossier to the existence of Bronze Age and medieval sites on the property, but it does not enlarge on their number or significance.

The territory is home to the remaining indigenous Udege people, 700 of whom live in one village, Krasny Yar, in the Bikin valley immediately west of one of the nominated areas. Hunting and fishing are their traditional and basic activities, combined with collecting fern, berries, mushrooms, and seeds. Their ability to manage the game animals and the habitat by the effective use of non-wood resources is critical to the survival of the Udege. A particular habitat of

outstanding importance and fragility is in the middle and upper reaches of the Iman River, where the species range from ginseng to the Amur tiger in association with 122 people of the Iman group of the Udege.

## **Management and Protection**

### *Legal status*

The whole of the nominated area is the property of the Russian Federation.

The nominated property area consists of four discrete statutorily designated areas (here numbered to accord with the map, Figure 2, not as in the text of the nomination):

1. Sikhote-Alin State Biosphere Nature Reserve;
2. Goralij Zoological Reserve;
3. Verkhnebikinski Landscape Reserve;
4. The territory of traditional land-use by the indigenous peoples of the Pozharski District on both sides of (but divided by) the Bikin River.

### *Management*

Management is delegated from the Federation to various agencies, notably the Nature Reserve. Funding of the Nature Reserve is currently self-generated, Federal, and international, with nothing from the Region. In 1999, international sources provided more than twice the Federal budget and 65% of the total (\$72,237). Of the 154 employees, six work for the Department of Ecological Enlightenment. Eleven field research stations inside the Reserve carry out monitoring. Economic activity in the Nature Reserve is nil, and its scale on adjoining territories extremely limited. Only poaching causes some anxiety. Fire is the main threat.

Figure 1 in the nomination dossier purports to show a buffer zone around Sikhote-Alin State Biosphere Nature Reserve (1. above) but it seems, at least at the scale of the map (not stated), to be coterminous with the boundary of the Nature Reserve. None of the other territories in the nomination claims a buffer zone.

Essentially, though supported by different regulations, all four territories are collectively seeking to protect the environment, conserve habitat, and maintain the indigenous human population as a viable society. Only No 4 is of direct concern to ICOMOS, and its detail in the nomination shows a growing concern throughout the 1990s, as expressed in statutory documents, for the well-being of the small Udege community.

In response to a request from the World Heritage Centre, a management plan was added to the nomination dossier (4 September 2000). The document concerned is entitled *A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Sikhote-Alin (2000)*, its primary purpose being "as a pre-planning document that limits the kinds and conditions of land-use, determines a system of ecological, economic and social goals and potential ways of achieving them." It is not a management plan in a form familiar to ICOMOS and so judgement must await the joint mission report;

moreover, its main thrust is concerned with the natural aspects of the nomination.

The Strategy nevertheless contains in its Chapter 7 discussion of a system of protected territories and territories having special resource-use restrictions, with various proposals for extending the protected areas and reducing modern-style activities such as logging. Part of the purpose of these proposals is to provide for indigenous peoples. A major proposal concerning the headwaters of the Bikin, for example, is to exclude commercial timber harvesting altogether, a proposal which, if implemented, would have implications for the inhabitants. The Strategy specifically acknowledges that this is so, seeking a merging of the boundaries of areas identified as important for nature conservation with those of "Ethnic Territories."

The traditional way of life in the area is now under considerable threat of collapse. Its reinforcement presents a task probably more important than simply ensuring the physical protection of the nominated territory. Faced by all the negative influences from man and nature, the existence, even rebirth, of a strong ethnic-cultural complex is a more reliable mechanism for integrated management of people and nature than all the laws that government can provide.

## **Conservation and Authenticity**

### *Conservation history*

No direct information is provided on this score (eg early efforts at protection, dates of founding National Parks, etc).

Fire, natural and man-made, is the principal agent of change and is a regular feature of the nominated area. Its effects are not necessarily either disastrous or long-term.

Currently a considerable effort, backed by international funds, is being made to promote nature conservation and tourism, especially in the upper and middle Bikin River area, with an emphasis on aspects of the traditional culture of the indigenous people. Programmes of reviving traditional crafts and ecological tourism are in hand. During 1999, the Nature Reserve was visited by 85 people on the one-day excursion, while 10–200 visitors per day bathed from the tourist base on the coast. Tourism is more developed, though numbers are still low, in the Bikin region. Currently ten to twelve groups of foreign tourists visit the whole territory per year.

### *Authenticity*

The remoteness of and difficulty of access to the area mean that cultural contact is difficult and of limited influence. Despite superficial changes, for example in clothing, culturally the most significant point is that the small indigenous population continues to live within a sustainable hunter-gatherer economy which, as well as keeping people alive, maintains the natural diversity of flora and fauna. Authenticity and integrity are, in cultural terms, respectively relatively undiminished and reasonably intact, but both could well succumb to the early 21st century.

## **Evaluation**

### *Action by ICOMOS*

For climatic and logistic reasons the joint ICOMOS-IUCN mission will not be able to visit the property until July 2001.

### *Qualities*

The heritage qualities of this property derive from its remoteness, unpolluted environment, nature/people sustainability, and small remnant population in danger of disappearing.

### *Comparative analysis*

No comparative cultural data are supplied in the nomination dossier. The earliest archaeology on the property finds its material analogues in Japan rather than mainland Asia.

### *ICOMOS comments*

This property is nominated as a mixed site, under both natural and cultural criteria. However, there is a very close relationship between the natural environment and the cultural element. This is in fact a cultural landscape, in which part of the natural environment has been, and continues to be, subtly modified by the small Udege hunter-gatherer society.

This raises an important issue: that of the need for consideration in a global perspective of "preserving" small, essentially non-Westernized indigenous populations in their "natural" habitats, as exemplified by peoples like the Udege characteristically living in a non-agricultural, or non-mechanized agricultural, economy within a significantly non-monumental lifestyle with minimal material culture. ICOMOS therefore recommends that such a study be initiated.

## **Brief description**

The Natural complex "Central Sikhote-Alin" nomination is of a huge and very important area in terms of natural history, consisting of several separate blocks of largely forested landscape. It contains a small population of hunter-gatherer people whose activities exploit the natural environment in a sustainable way and simultaneously have a significant effect upon flora and fauna.

## **ICOMOS Comments**

ICOMOS was informed unofficially after the joint mission had taken place that the State Party was withdrawing its nomination of this property under the cultural criteria. Official confirmation had not been received when this evaluation was sent for printing.

ICOMOS, August 2001