On the Systematics and Distribution of Sheep of the Genus *Ovis* (Artiodactyla, Bovidae) in Eastern Siberia and the Far East in the Pleistocene and Holocene

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Abstract—The fossil and subfossil findings of Siberian snow sheep *Ovis nivicola* and argali sheep *O. ammon* were analyzed. Snow sheep were widely spread in the Late Pleistocene and Early Holocene: their range covered most of Eastern Siberia and the Far East and the southern part of Western Siberia. The argali distribution area in Siberia was also larger at that time than nowadays: they inhabited the southern part of Western and Eastern Siberia up to the northern Transbaikalia and southwestern Yakutia. The most ancient form of the sheep inhabiting the southern parts of Eastern Siberia from the Villafrancian was argali-like sheep. The Siberian snow sheep appears to have originated from argali-like sheep at the end of the Early Pleistocene or the beginning of the Middle Pleistocene in the mountains of southern Siberia. In the Middle Pleistocene, *O. nivicola* started settling to the north and northeast and reached Alaska through the Beringian Bridge. A comparison of fossil remains of *O. nivicola* from Yakutia and Transbaikalia and the present subspecies *O. n. lydekkeri* and *O. n. nivicola* testifies to the fact that the former are close to the latter. The fossil snow sheep from the southern part of Western Siberia is worth considering as an independent subspecies (*O. nivicola tomensis* V. Gromova, 1947). The validity of *O. ammon fossilis* M. Pavlova, 1911, a fossil argali from the Baikalian region, is confirmed. An additional description of this subspecies is given.