

Mammoth find

Complete baby turns up in Siberia



The word 'mammoth' comes from the Russian word *mamont*. This is the name given to a type of elephant, sometimes with long curved tusks and long hair, which lived many thousands of years ago. 'Mammoth' is also used to mean gigantic (or 'as large as a mammoth').

Its tail is lopsided. Close up, it looks suspiciously like a small, and unremarkable, Asian elephant.

5 But scientists were yesterday hailing the sensational discovery of a perfectly preserved baby woolly mammoth, which died around 10 000 years ago and was found in the frozen tundra of northern Russia. Experts said
10 the six-month-old female calf was a rare complete specimen. The animal's trunk and eyes are intact. It even has fur.

15 A reindeer herder, Yuri Khudi, stumbled across the carcass in May near the Yuribei river in Russia's Yamal-Nenents autonomous district, in a virtually inaccessible part of north-western Siberia.

20 Extinct woolly mammoths – and giant tusks – have turned up in Siberia for centuries. But it is unusual for a complete example to be recovered. The last major find was in 1997
25 when a family in the neighbouring Taymyr Peninsula came across a tusk attached to what turned out to be a 20 380-year-old mammoth carcass.

30 The latest 130cm tall, 50kg Siberian specimen appears to have died just as the species was heading for extinction during the last Ice Age. It is being sent to Japan for further tests.

35 "The mammoth has no defects except that its tail was a bit off," Alexei Tikhonov, one of a group of international experts who examined the mammoth last week in the Arctic town of Salekhard, told BBC Online. He added: "In terms of its state of
40 preservation, this is the world's most valuable discovery."

45 Global warming has made it easier for woolly mammoth hunters to hack the animal out of Russia's thawing permafrost. An entire mammoth industry has sprung up around the far eastern frontier town of Yakutsk.

50 Many examples are simply sold on the black market – and can be seen in Russian souvenir shops, next to unhappy-looking stuffed brown bears.

55 Mammoths first appeared around 48 million years ago. Most of them died out 12 000 years ago at the end of the Pleistocene era.

Glossary

autonomous having the right to govern itself

carcass dead body

permafrost soil that is permanently frozen

Pleistocene the period of history when the last great Ice Age occurred

Luke Harding
Wednesday 11 July 2007,
Guardian, Moscow

- 1 a) In the opening paragraph, to what does the pronoun 'it' refer?

1 mark
- b) Why did the journalist choose to use this pronoun before saying what he is writing about?

1 mark
- 2 What is 'tundra'?

1 mark
- 3 In which part of Russia was the mammoth found?

1 mark
- 4 The remains of other woolly mammoths have been found before. What aspects of **this** find are particularly exciting?

2 marks
- 5 What gender was the woolly mammoth?

1 mark
- 6 What expression does the journalist use early in the report, based on Tikhonov's observation that 'its tail was a bit off'?

1 mark
- 7 How do unscrupulous people try to make money out of smaller finds like this?

1 mark
- 8 What is a 'black market'?

1 mark
- 9 When did the woolly mammoth species become extinct?

1 mark
- 10 What sentence in this report might make readers hope for further information about this find in due course?

1 mark