

# “BOW ELK HUNT”

## Composition of the Kanozero Petroglyph Complex

### Abstract

This paper analyzes a scene from the Kamenniy 7 panel of the Kanozero petroglyph complex (North-West Russia). It could be called a “Bow Elk Hunt” scene. Previously, it was not distinguished as a scene. The article presents arguments in favor of the compositional connection of this scene with the neighboring large composition “Bear Hunt”. The typological similarity of the analyzed scene with another elk hunting scene from this cluster was also revealed. The figure of an elk hunt with a bow is compared with similar scenes from Alta (Norway) and Zalavruga (Karelia, Russia).

### Key words:

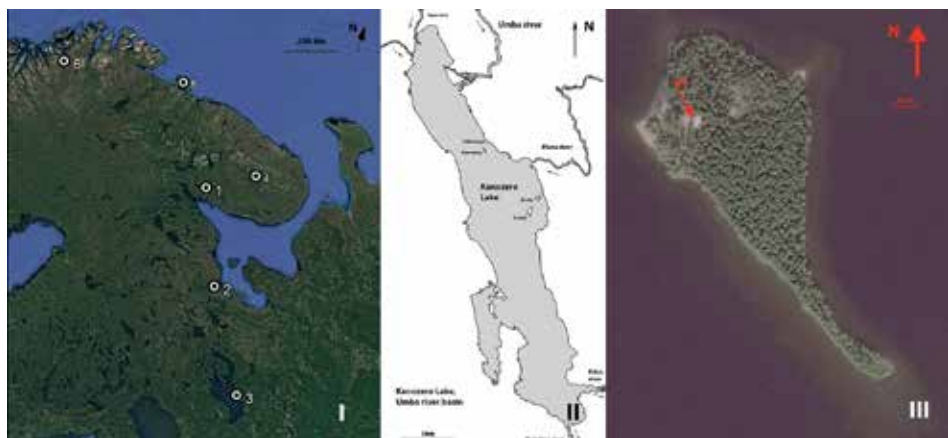
Kanozero, petroglyphs, Fennoscandia, rock art, narrative, hunting, archer, arrows, elk.

### Introduction

The petroglyphs of Kanozero, discovered in 1997, are the largest complex of rock carvings on the Kola Peninsula (Kolpakov, Shumkin 2012; Likhachev 2011; Likhachev 2018) (Fig. 1.I.). The largest panel with

petroglyphs - Kamenniy 7 - was discovered on the Kamenniy Island in June 1999 (Likhachev 2018: 66) (Fig. 1.III) and, according to the author of the article, contains about 800 figures. Recently, some images and com-

Figure 1. I) Locations of the largest accumulations of rock paintings in the Eastern Fennoscandia: 1) Kanozero, 2) Vyg River (Zalavruga, Besovy sledki), 3) Lake Onega, 4) Chalmny-Varre, 5) Rybachiy Peninsula, 6) Alta; II) Map of the Kanozero Lake; III) Location of the Kamenniy 7 panel on the Kamenniy Island. Illustration based on space image of HereWeGo: V. Likhachev.



positions of this panel were documented with use of the photogrammetry technique, which made it possible to see previously elusive image details (Likhachev 2017).

### Documentation and Description of the Composition and its Figures

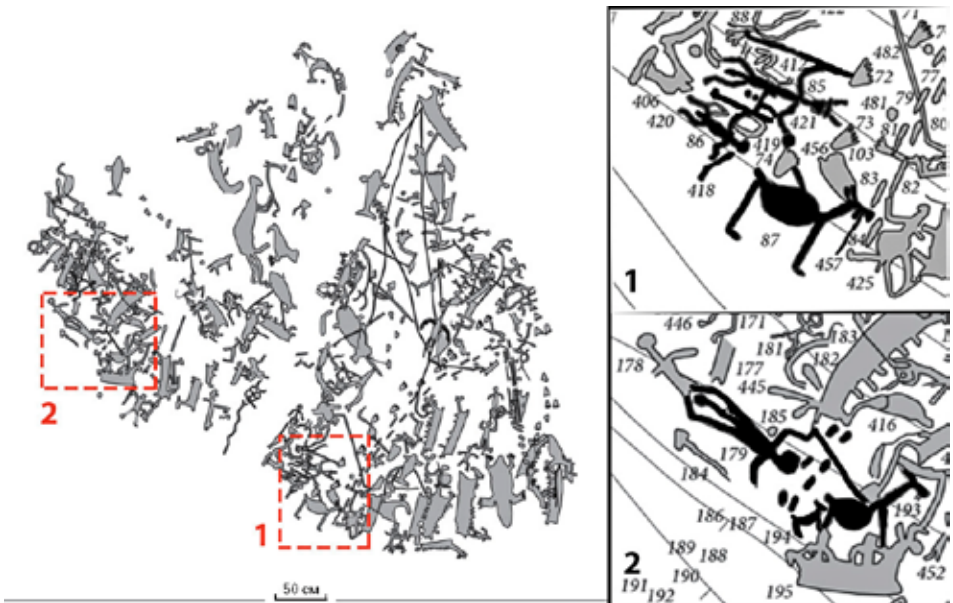
The studied composition belongs to the Kamenniy 7 panel (Fig. 2-3). In 2000 it was exposed by researchers of the Kola archaeological expedition as a part of the Kamenniy 7 panel. Initially, the tracings of the figures were published on the website of the Kola archaeological expedition in 2005 and later in separate publications (Kolpakov et al. 2008: 94, Fig. 80; 7; 2; 1). The author of the article first recorded these images on video in 2001 (Fig. 3.1).

The catalog separately describes the image of an elk: “k7n87 - zoomorph in profile, two-legged, with an elk beard” (Kolpakov, Shumkin 2012: 181), and a “Pair with spears”: “Two anthropomorphs of different size placed side-by-side, both have a spear

in the right hand. Both are depicted with a phallus, the smaller figure holds almost horizontally a curved oblong object in its left hand, the head of the bigger figure is topped with a “hat” in the form of one horizontal line with two vertical lines above it (k7n85, k7n86)(Kolpakov, Shumkin 2012: 319).

The Norwegian archaeologist Jan Magne Gjerde, who worked as part of the Kola archaeological expedition in 2005, published his tracings of these figures (Gjerde 2010) (Fig. 4). In the documentation, the figures differ from the catalog (Kolpakov, Shumkin 2012) in two important details: 1) there is no image of a “curved oblong object” in the hand of a smaller hunter, 2) there appeared a figure of the “arrow” protruding the back of the elk figure. The researchers did not associate the “bear hunting” composition with those figures of hunters and elk (Gjerde 2010: 141, fig. 70; Kolpakov, Shumkin 2012: 325).

Figure 2. Segment of the Kamenniy 7 panel. Areas with scenes of elk hunting are marked with red squares: 1) The Bow Elk Hunt composition. Fragment 1; 2) Another Elk Hunting composition. Compositions are highlighted in black. Illustration: V. Likhachev after (Kolpakov, Shumkin 2012).



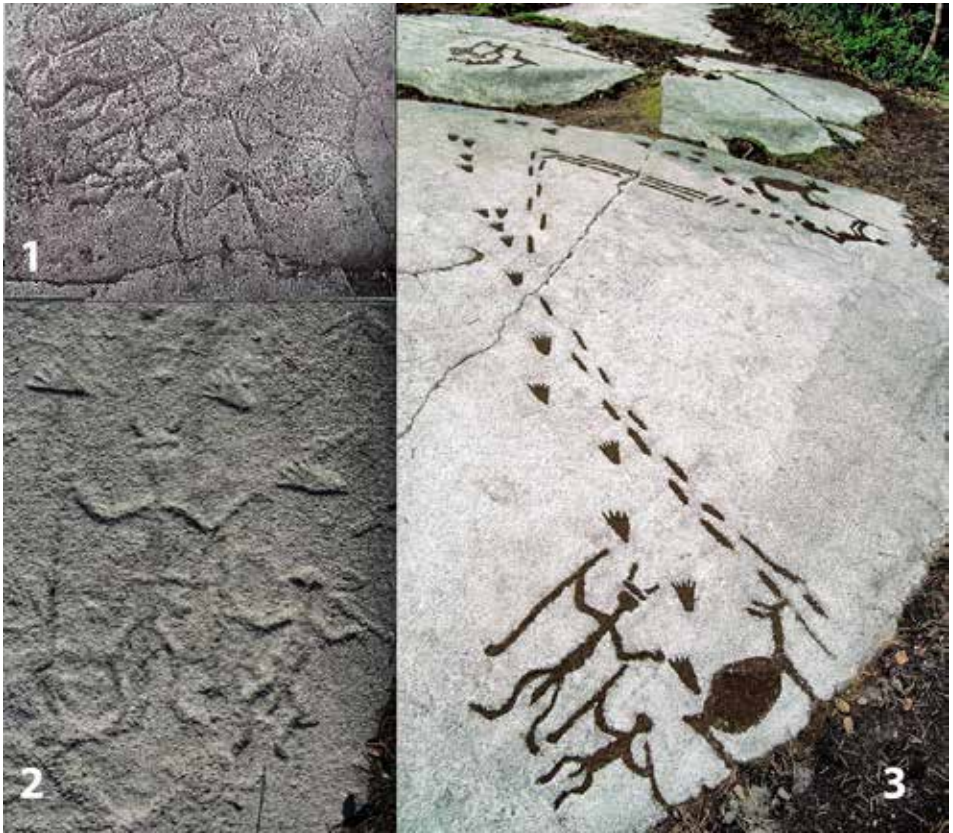


Figure 3. The "Bow Elk Hunt" scene: 1) Figures powdered with turf for better visibility. Screenshot from a 2001 video from V. Likhachev's archive; 2) "Hunters". Fragment of the composition. 2006. Photo: V. Likhachev; 3) Figures of hunters and an elk painted with turf powder as part of the "Bear Hunt" composition. 2005. Photo: G. Alexandrov.

Figure 4. Fragment of Kamennyi 7 panel documentation from (Gjerde 2010: fig. 226, fragment);



### Scene description

In our analysis, we use pictures and visualizations of petroglyphs based on 3D models (Fig. 5, Fig. 6). This composition includes several anthropomorphic figures ("hunters") and one zoomorphic figure ("elk"). The figures are united by hunting tools: a spear, a bow, and arrows which are fired at the "elk".

### Elk

The figure of an elk forms the center of the composition. Long legs, elongated neck, hunchbacked back, long ears, "beard" - these details form the image of an elk (spring, hornless) or elk cow. The images of hooves are reminiscent of bear paws. This,



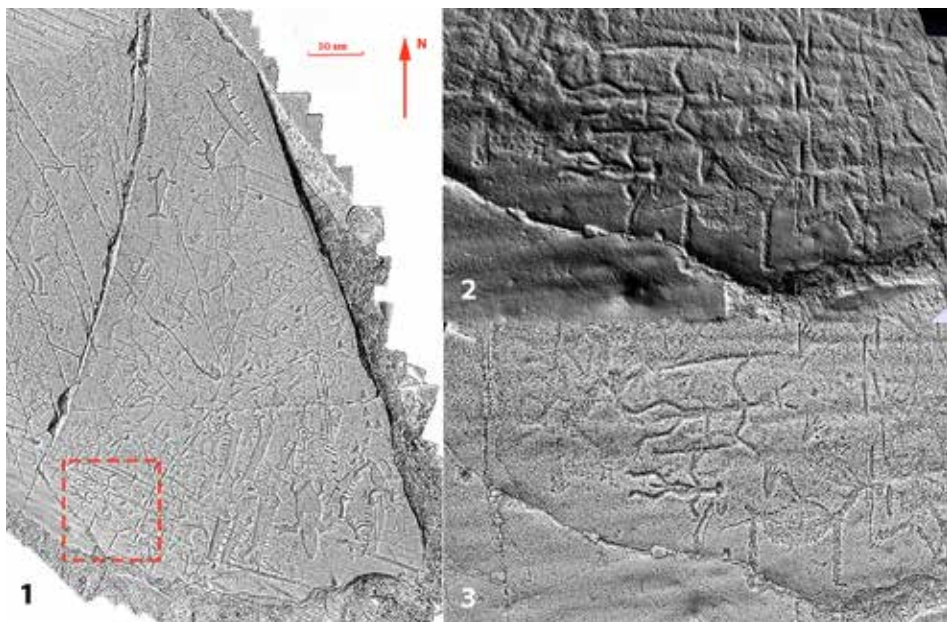
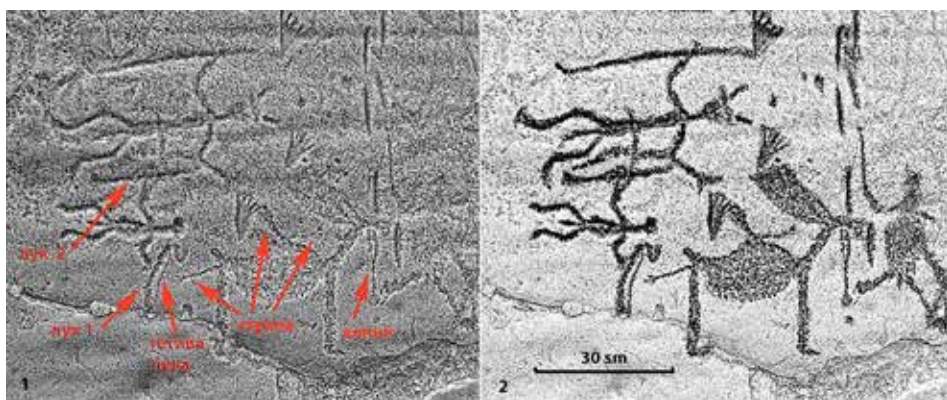


Figure 5. 3D-visualization of a fragment of the Kamenny 7 panel: 1) a segment of the Kamenny 7 panel. The red dotted line shows the location of the composition of interest to us; 2) 3D-visualization of the composition; 3) 3D-visualization with "pseudo-rubbing" filter. 3D processing and illustration: V. Likhachev.

perhaps, indicates a symbolic combination of an elk and a bear: from the figure we also see the beginning of a chain of bear footprints. Such a manner of depicting elk "feet" is also found among other images of elks in this Kamenny 7 panel: k7n296, k7n298, k7n304 (Kolpakov, Shumkin 2012). In terms of its proportions and shape the

head of the elk / elk cow is typologically close to the figures of some elk heads crowning the stems of boats, which are depicted in the same panel of petroglyphs: k7n9, k7n89, k7n198, k7n218, k7n330, k7n525 (Kolpakov, Shumkin 2012). This may indicate a stylistic connection between these images.

Figure 6. Elk hunting scene. Outlining of figures on 3D visualization. Illustration: V. Likhachev.



## Hunters

The two most expressive "hunter" figures (Hunter 1 and Hunter 2) are depicted on the left. Both, due to the compositional solution and the carving technique, create the feeling that they were made by one hand. They are located along the line of glacial scars on the rock surface, parallel to the base of the rock, but perpendicular to the figure of an elk and the direction of bear tracks carved nearby (the "Bear Hunt" composition). The hunters are made en face and united by a similar manner of depicting the legs, arms, neck, "penis", and have similar proportions of the bodies. The figures differ in size and have different objects in the hands. The figures are deeply cut and polished. This technique is close to the one in which the footprints of a bear and a skier are carved in the "Bear Hunt" composition. To the right of the elk figure there is another anthropomorphic figure (Hunter 3), which seems to be also involved in the scene.

### Hunter 1

A tall hunter is depicted wearing a "hat with horns", holding a spear in his right hand. His left hand extends towards the bear track, which, on the other hand, touches the "arrow" that hit the elk in the back. Another interpretation is possible: the bear's footprint interrupts the image of the spear, with which the hunter hits the elk in the back.

### Hunter 2 (Archer)

The smaller hunter is depicted without a headdress and, according to my interpretation, holds a pair of bows in his hands. In the left hand is a small bow from which an arrow is fired. A bowstring is shown with a thin line which unites the ends of the bow stick. Close to the hunter's head, a small "horseshoe"-like figure is carved near the end of the bow. Perhaps this is a detail of the bow - a hook to which the bowstring clings. In the right hand, in my opinion, the hunter holds another bow, almost the size of the hunter himself. It is loaded, the arrow is superimposed on the body of another hunter. According to Kolpakov and Shumkin, the hunter holds a spear in his right

hand (Kolpakov, Shumkin 2012). In Gjerde's drawing (Gjerde 2010), this weapon also looks like a "spear". This figure is reminiscent of some images of an archer on the petroglyphs of Alta (Fig. 9).

Despite the fact that the figures of hunters and the figure of an elk are made using different carving techniques, we see that these figures are connected. An arrow from a bow of a smaller hunter is fired at the backside of an elk. Another arrow (or spear) sticks out of its back, another object that looks like an arrow or spear is stuck in the muzzle of the animal. From the head of the elk to the left upwards, partially coinciding with the direction of the ears, an elongated subtriangular spot is depicted, which can be interpreted as "blood from the affected head of the elk" (the ears of the elk are superimposed on the spot). Another interpretation of this "spot" was put forward as a "bear footprint" (by E.M. Kolpakov, a video record of 2001).

### Hunter 3

To the right of the elk, we also see a frontal anthropomorphic figure with a large body. The anthropomorphic figure is described in the catalog as "**k7n425** anthropomorphic, with a phallus, (damaged)" (Kolpakov, Shumkin 2012: 237). As I see that figure – the man holds in the right hand an oblong object (spear or club). In the catalog, this "object in the hand" figure is interpreted as a ski track image (k7n82)(Kolpakov, Shumkin 2012: 180). According to my interpretation, this hunter hits the elk head. Another similar figure is sticking out of the muzzle of the elk.

Tracks of skis started from the *Hunter 3* figure may indicate that the hunter is chasing the bear in the scene "Bear Hunt".

### Carving technique

The figure of the *Elk* is made in large-dot pecking technique. *Hunter 1* and *Hunter 2* are made using different carving techniques - perhaps the figures were first also pecked, but then deepened by rubbing and grinding. It may indicate that these figures were repeatedly updated, unlike some others. The bow that *Hunter 2* holds in his left

hand is pecked. The bowstring is almost a jeweler's work (therefore, it was not seen before), and is also made in small-dot pecking. *Hunter 3* is made with the pecking technique. This figure is superimposed by others: 1) in the region of the left hand, by the image of a boat, 2) below, on the torso and left leg, by another anthropomorphic figure. An interesting feature is that a thin crack runs in the upper part of the image of the elk: an arrow in the back of the elk was carved along this crack, and it also runs along the elk's back.

All three hunters (despite the different carving techniques) are connected both by the "Bow Elk Hunt" scene and, probably, by the "Bear Hunt" scene (figures also partly similar in the carving technique). The "Bow Elk Hunt" scene may depict the first stage - the killing of an elk for hunting lure. Hunting for the lure of a bear that has left its den is still a common method (Krechmar 2005: 173). After the animal was tracked down near the lure (killed elk), the action develops as the pursuit of a wounded animal by one of the hunters. A detailed analysis of the composition "Bear Hunt" is beyond the scope of this article.

**"Hunting for an elk cow with a calf" - a similar composition from the same panel**

In this segment of the Kamenniy 7 panel, at a distance of 1.5 meters to the right, there is a composition (Fig. 2.2, Fig. 7), which has certain similarities with the composition the "Bow Elk Hunt".

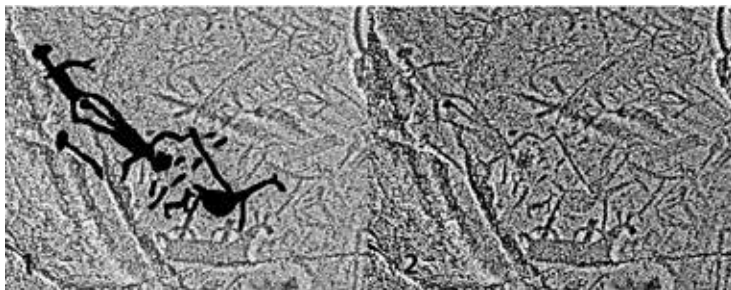
In the scene a hunter strikes an elk cow in its back with a spear. Behind the elk cow there is a small figure of an elk calf. Per-

haps, a boat with an elk-headed stem and en face passengers is a part of the composition, it is superimposed on the hooves of an elk cow.

Among similarities with the "Bow Elk Hunt" composition (Fig. 2.1):

- 1) The figure of an elk cow has similar proportions, a typical elongated neck.
- 2) The hunter hits the elk in the back with a spear in a similar way to *Hunter 1* in the composition "Bow Elk Hunt". True, the hunter holds a spear in his right hand, not in his left as in the composition the "Bow Elk Hunt". In his left hand he holds another spear with a circle at the end - for support, like a ski stick. A similar support for a spear and a bow has ethnographic parallels, in particular, among Siberian hunters (Helskog 2018). The image of the spear in the left hand is destroyed in the upper part by a crack.
- 3) The figure of the hunter is depicted perpendicular to the figure of the elk cow. The hunter is depicted en face, and has a penis.
- 4) The composition contains a chain of tracks.
- 5) The next point is interesting. Although this composition is not singled out as an "elk hunting" scene in the catalog (Kolpakov, Shumkin 2012), at the same time, this figure of a hunter (k7n179) and another anthropomorphic figure located nearby (k7n179) are singled out in the "love" scene (in the sense of "copulation") (Kolpakov, Shumkin 2012: 320). We may be seeing a

Figure 7. A hunting scene for an elk cow with a calf: 1) Tracing of composition on the basis of 3D visualization; 2) 3D visualization without drawing. Illustration: V. Likhachev.



scene in which the hunter is simultaneously “making love” with a woman and spearing an elk cow.

### **Image of an archer in Eloviy 1 panel**

Previously, it was believed that at Kanozero we have only one image of an archer in the Eloviy 1 panel (Fig. 8): “The possible depiction of a bow (e1n19) should be considered in more detail. The fact is that this is the only of the Kanozero images, which can tentatively be identified as a bow. It represents an arched line narrowing to both slightly crooked ends. Therefore it has the profile of a composite bow and, in addition to this, is held in the hands of an anthropomorphous character at the ready.” (Kolpakov, Shumkin 2012: 299).

The image of the archer from the Eloviy 1 panel is carved in a different style than the archer from the Kamenniy 7 panel. This is a profile figure, but the archer shows both legs, and he is depicted, apparently, on skis. The figure is superimposed on the image of the fish (Fig. 8.2).

### **Analogs in other petroglyphic complexes of Fennoscandia**

Narrative compositions with archers among petroglyphs of the “hunting tradition” in Northern Fennoscandia are widely represented in Alta (Norway) (Fig. 1.6) and Zalavruga (Karelia) (Fig. 1.2).

### **Alta**

Compositions with archers attacking reindeer and elk are found in Alta (Helskog 1988; Tansem 2009) (Fig. 9). *Similarities:*

the figures are depicted en face, archers are sometimes paired with a hunter with a spear, there are images of both a loaded bow and after firing.

### **Zalavruga**

There are several images of archers involved in the hunt for the beast (Savvateev 1970). In the famous scene from the fourth group of Novaya Zalavruga, archer-skiers overtake an elk cow with two calves (Fig. 10, Fig. 11. 1). Elk calves are hit with arrows, and one of the archers hits an elk cow with a spear. The style of depicting an arrow is related to the Kanozero scene, as well as the way of hitting an elk - a spear in the back, and an arrow in the back leg (butt). In another scene from the same panel, the hunter, having hit a bear cub with an arrow, throws a bow (a small bow) and finishes off the beast with a spear (Fig. 11.2), as in the Kanozero scene we have considered. In another adjacent composition, the bear is also struck with an arrow and finished with a spear (Fig. 11.3). In contrast to the Kanozero scene, the archer-hunters on the New Zalavruga are shown in profile, but also have headdresses and, in some cases, a phallus is shown. Spears and bows in some cases have a circle for support in the snow.

### **Conclusions**

The described composition is notable for the depiction of hunting with a bow and arrows. The archer in the composition presumably holds two bows. This is the only image of an archer on Kamenniy Island and

Figure 8. Figure of an archer-skier. The Eloviy 1 panel. 1) According to the catalog (Kolpakov, Shumkin 2012); 2) The image on the visualization is based on the 3D model. Illustration: V. Likhachev.

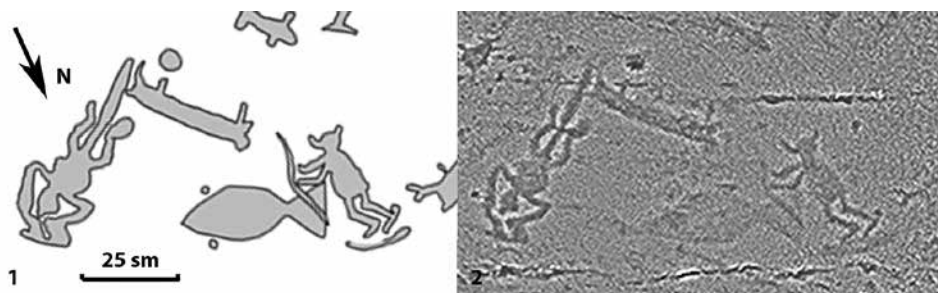


Figure 9. Some compositions of elk and reindeer hunting with archers. Alta, Norway. According to (Tansem 2009), taken from (Kolpakov 2019).

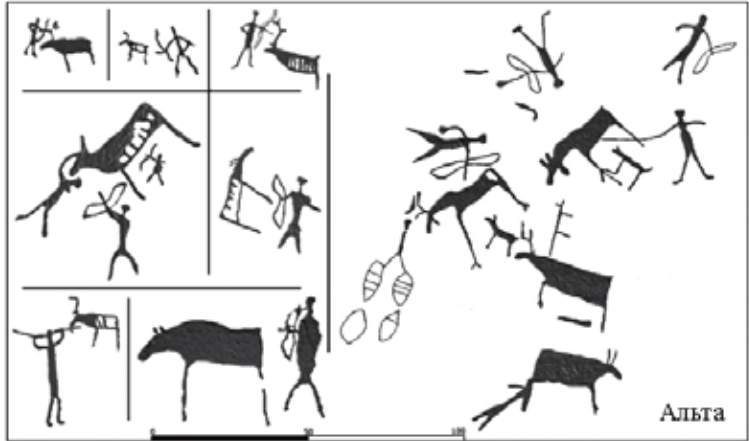


Figure 10. Elk hunt. New Zalavruga IV. Visualization is based on a 3D model: V. Likhachev.

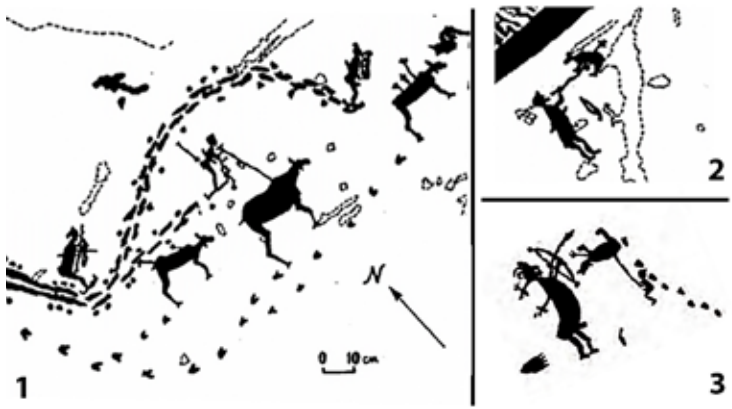


Figure 11. Scenes of hunting for animals (elk, bear) using a bow. New Zalavruga IV. Illustration: V. Likhachev after (Savvateev 1970).



the second one on Kanozero. The figure of a smaller bow is distinguished by its detail - a filigree image of a bowstring. The figures in the composition are created in mixed media - carving, pecking, cutting and differ in depth. The elk hunting scene with a bow may be related to the adjacent bear hunting scene. If so, then this composition clarifies the details of the hunt and the interaction between the hunter/hunters and the bear. This scene has analogs both in the Kanozero complex itself and in other rock art complexes of Fennoscandia, in particular in Alta and Zalavruga.

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