

between rock art and micro-landscape) made an unexpected discovery in the White Sea area. Many new carvings were found at one of the most famous and well documented rock art group – Staraya Zalavruga which more than in two times exceeds their previous amount. The discovery was a result of a new way of rock art search with a help of black plastic. Large and wide piece of plastic covers over the rock art panel. Researcher standing under it raises a little one edge of the plastic, and coming light makes images very relief and visible. This method is very popular in Scandinavia and especially suitable for taking pictures. So far we had investigated Staraya Zalavruga rocks and 3 nameless islands in the lower reaches of Vyg River (1).

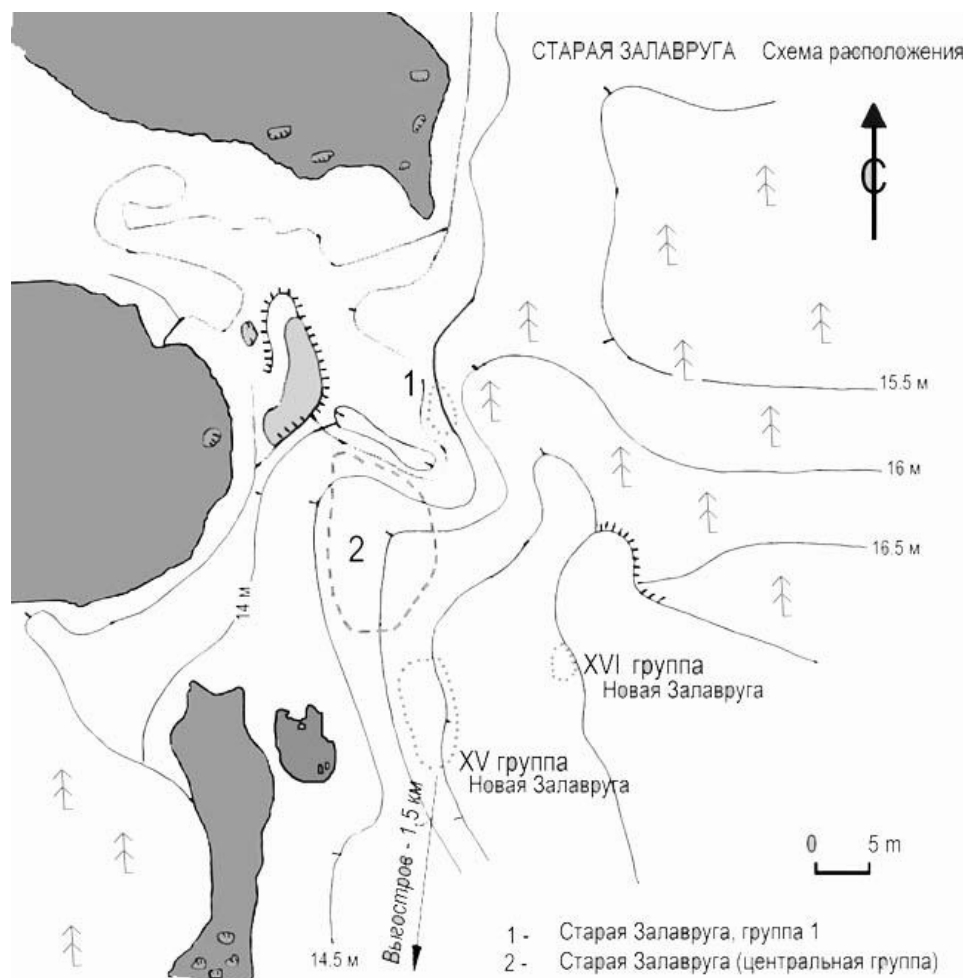


Fig. 2

The locality of Staraya Zalavruga with 3 groups of carvings was discovered in September, 5th, 1936 by V.I. Ravdonikas on the island of Bolshoi Malinin, 1,7 km north-east from Vygostrov village (2, fig.1-2; photo1). These panels with 216 separate images exceed 200 m². According to Ravdonikas there are 190 carvings in the main group where two slopes (wide top or central and side or peripheral slope), but many of them are hardly visible. Ravdonikas himself estimated this discovery like a great and important research event. There are several unique compositions, real masterpieces of the Neolithic monumental art of Northern Europe (2, p.12). At the same time, Staraya Zalavruga is one of the most poor preserved rock art groups in Karelia. The nature and anthropogenic influence on the site are obvious here: weathering, ice cracks, lichen and modern fire-places. All this makes petroglyphs study very difficult. V. Ravdonikas thought that part of the carvings was not possible to be registered and that the destructive process was still in progress (2, p.15). Yu. Savvateyev who was working at Staraya Zalavruga in the 60th wrote that many figures revealed by first investigator became invisible by this time, especially on the top of the panel, and partly disappeared (3, p. 58-61).

Our recent field work at this place shows that the state of Staraya Zalavruga site is not so critical. It is quite stable, at least since 30th further destructions of the petroglyphs has not happened. Comparison of the field documentation (traces, pictures and descriptions) prepared in 30th, 60th and in 2001-2005 proves this. In 2005, with black plastic use we checked up all images in the central panel of Staraya Zalavruga, published by V. Ravdonikas in his book in 1938 (fig.3), and were lucky to find 283 new ones. Most of them have been found in the south-east and north-east edges of the rock art panel. Besides, we managed to distinguish several carvings inside the giant reindeers' bodies (fig.4). How was it possible? The matter is that visiting card of the Staraya Zalavruga site – 3 huge animals – were carved with big quartz tools much deeper along the contour of the figures, while the main part of them was made not so deep and careful. This allowed seeing inside big carvings small images which appeared here earlier. These are boats-like, harpoons lines, reindeer, and many fragments (totally about 20). Probably, later it would be real to get much more information about their outlines. In the northern part of the panel there are also some cases of palimpsests. So far among rock art of Karelia palimpsests were very seldom (3), but here we see how people carved their pictures on earlier used rock.

Центральное панно Старой Залавруги (по В.И. Равдоникасу)

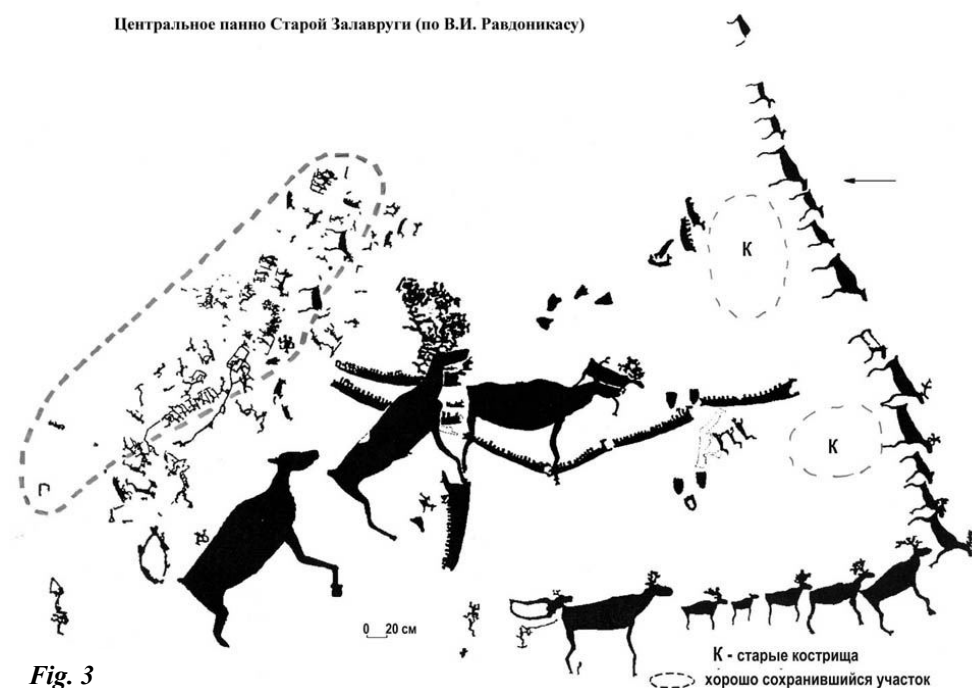


Fig. 3

Thus, the central part of Staraya Zalavruga was dense filled with carvings, their number has reached now almost 500, which makes this rock art group the largest in Karelia (Table 1).

Petroglyphs of Staraya Zalavruga (central panel) Table 1

Name of image	year 1936	year 2005	Total
Animals (reindeers)	29	9	38
Anthropomorphous figures	43	15	58
Boats	31	42	73
Big footprints	17	10	27
Small footprints	58	192	250
Flying arrows	6	-	6
Lines	20	14	34
“Contour fish”	1	-	1
Fragments	12	44	56
Snake	1	-	1
“Solar sign”	1	-	1
Spiral	-	1	1
Sea animals	-	6	6
“Tortoise”	1	-	1
“Anchor”	-	1	1
Total	190	282	474



Центральное панно Старой Залавруги-2005 (по Н.В. Лобановой)

Fig. 4

Full study of this panel is not completed yet. Southern part of the rock is damaged by modern fireplaces (fig.3). It was also covered with carvings partly spoiled by now (fragments of reindeers). We may expect revealing very much eroded human-like (and possible some boats-like) figures by the second giant reindeer, which were understood by all researchers like very large and magnificent antlers (fig.4). The potential for discoveries is not exhausted yet both here and in other groups of the White Sea area as well.

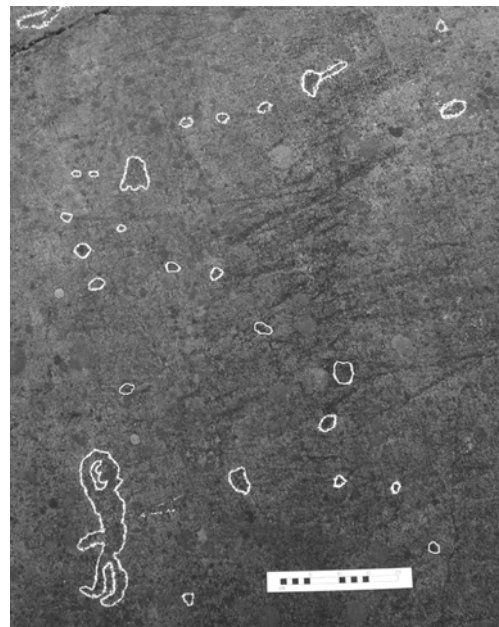


Fig. 5



Fig. 6

Most predominant images among newly-found petroglyphs are human and animal footprints (202), boats (43) and unclear fragments (44) (Table 1). Footprints vary in size and shape. They are round with a little groove, or prolonged with fingers. Many footprints are very small – less than 1 cm in diameter (fig.5). There are some quite massive – 15-20 cm in length analogous to Besovy Sledki (fig. 6).

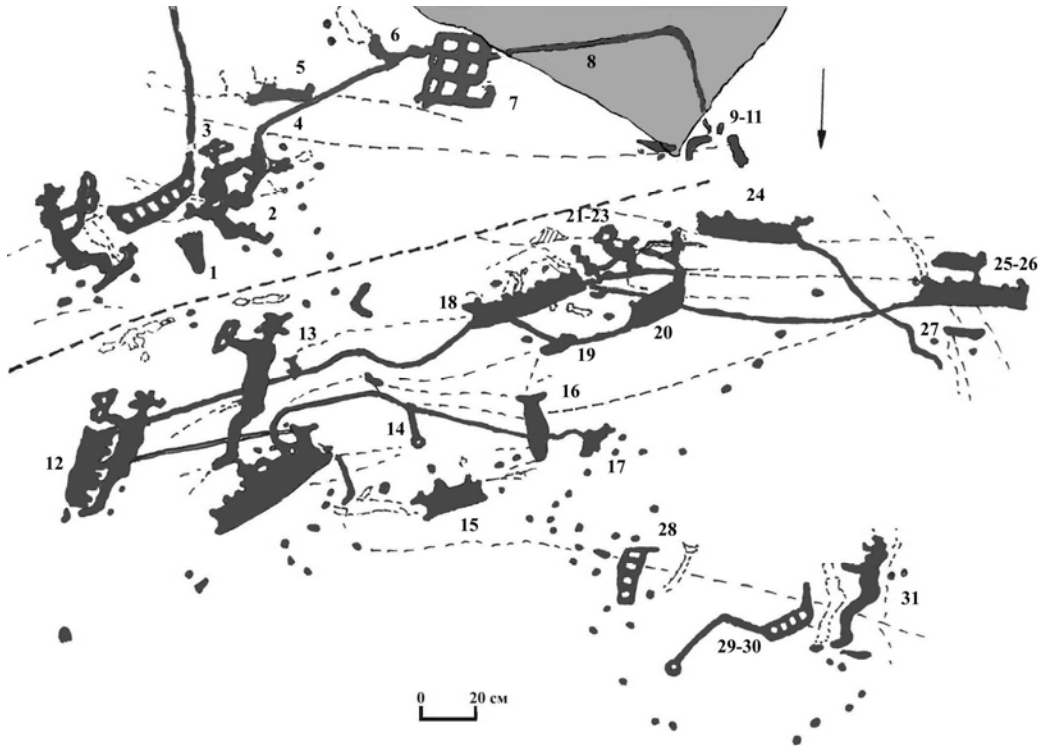


Fig. 7

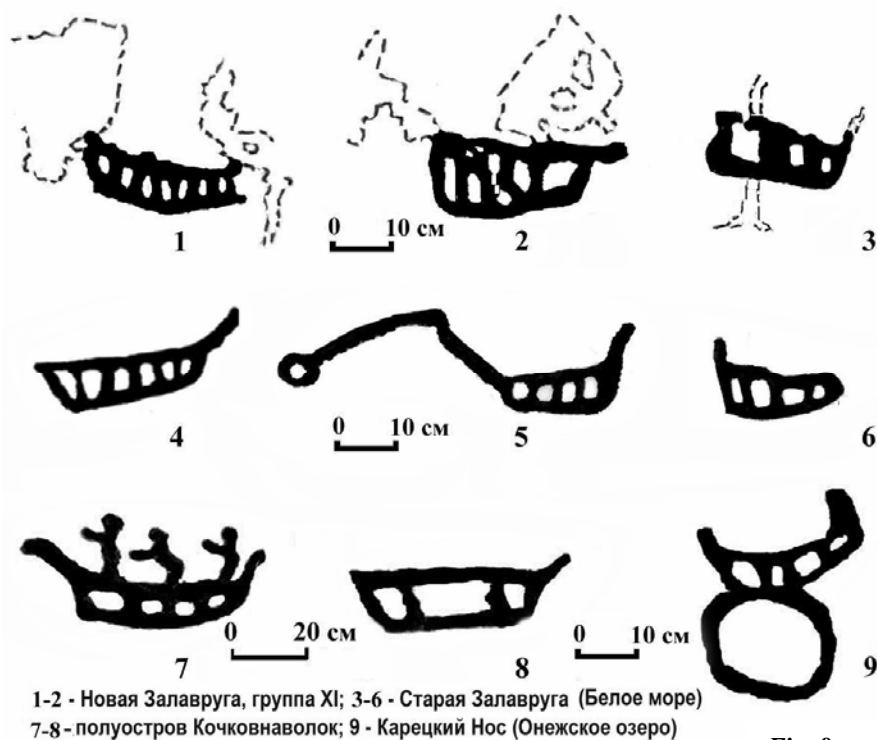


Fig. 8

To our view, the most interesting are contour boats without crews (fig.7:28–30). Probably, they represent a kind of frame boats. One of them has a long curved line with a ring at the end – possible “anchor”. Similar images we can see in the group XI of Novaya Zalavruga and among the Onega Lake rock carvings (Kochkovnavolok peninsula and Karetsky Cape) (fig. 8).

Absolutely unusual figure is a spiral connected to a reindeer leg (illustration of Sàmi legend about “sun reindeer”?). There are many other new petroglyphs in this part of rock – to the east of the first giant reindeer back, mainly boats of different sizes shapes but quite typical for the Vyg River rock art (fig.9).



Fig. 9

The large carving described by V. Ravdonikas as “contour fish with tail and fin” turned into a complex composition of whale hunting (fig.10). Probably, 6 boats and 4 whales are acting in this interesting scene (fig.7). These newly-found carvings are partly destroyed because they were recovered by other scene with humans. Earlier at Staraya Zalavruga such motifs were lucky. Now there are at least 3 whale compositions carved in the north-east part of the panel). One of the figures which was explained by V. Ravdonikas as a forest animal with 4 legs very much remains a tortoise (Ravdonikas, 1938, p.35) and by A. Linevsky as an animal skin (Linevsky, 1939, p. 186) now can be interpreted like sea animal, may be a kind of seal or walrus. The line is connected this image with a boat (fig.11.). So, we see the most popular and typical composition in the White Sea rocks.

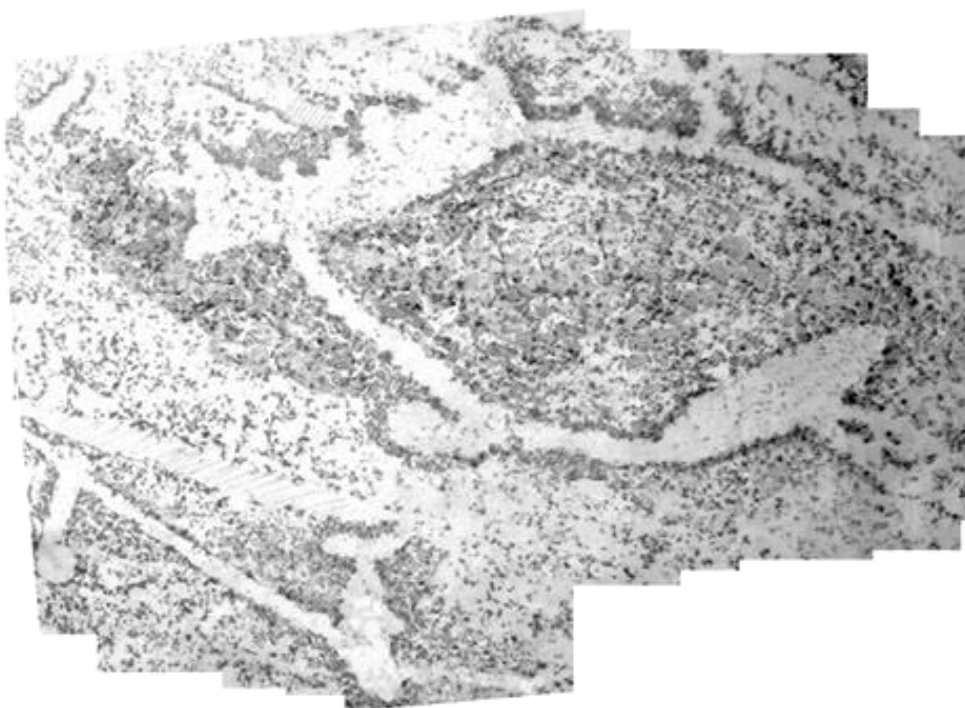
There are many additions and changes of our writing the panel in the south-western part One of the figures described by A. Linevsky as “a dead person with wounded stomach” (4, p. 179-181). Instead of it we found something else (fig.12).

Three giant reindeers recovered (partly or completely) many earlier scenes with participation of boats and other images – no less than 15 (fig.4). There is a very strange carving among them – rectangular shape with rows of “windows” inside it; two lines are stretching from this carving in different directions (fig.7:7). Almost in the centre of the first giant reindeer we found the outlines of a smaller one and a narrow long boat behind it (fig.4). We are facing not an easy task to reveal more carefully this earlier layer of figures inside the largest ones.

Despite of the sufficiently increasing of the rock carvings number at Staraya Zalavruga the motifs are still previous – footprints, boats and human beings. At the same time, new materials give us a good possibility to understand the sequence of petroglyphs in this panel. The opinion of earlier filling of the central panel where the huge reindeers’ figures dominate and later appearance small images in the peripheral side is supported by all researchers worked with Zalavruga materials (2,4,5-6). Some of them give a very detailed analyze of Staraya Zalavruga rock art stratigraphy which looks like following (7, p.161–162): 1. Most reindeers in the western row and the main part of the southern row. 2. A chain-like succession of boats – flotilla. 3. Three huge reindeers and some additions, mostly anthropomorphous and other figures. 4. Peripheral part with its numerous human and other type images which reflect a new stage of rock art development.



“Контурная рыба” (копия В.И. Равдоникаса)



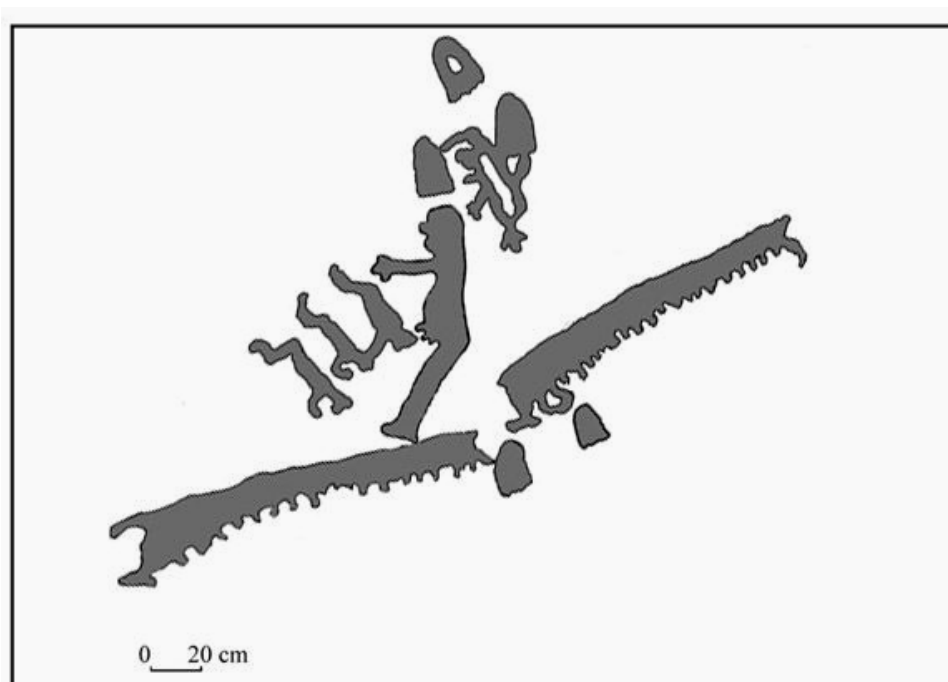
Та же фигура (копия Н.В. Лобановой)

Fig. 10

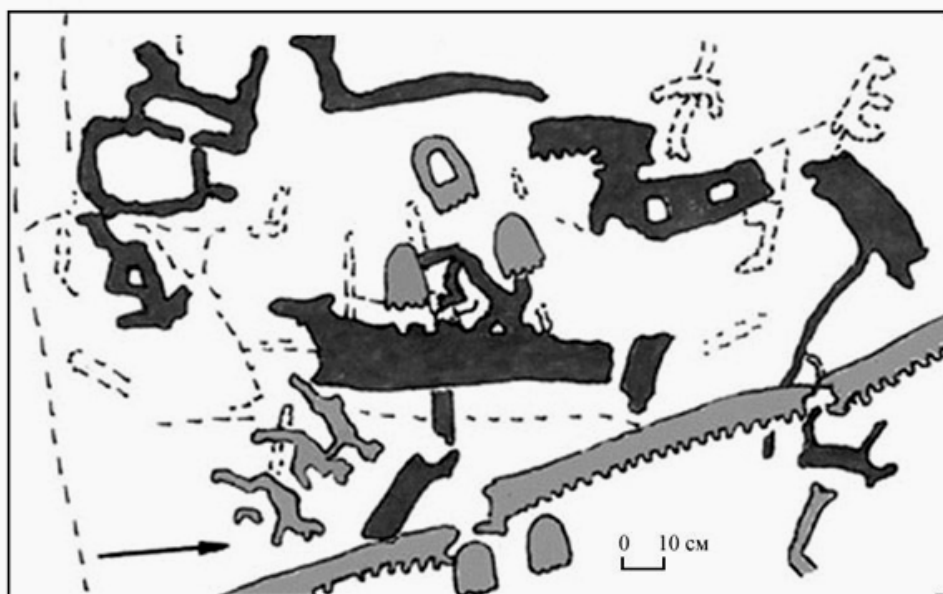


Fig. 11

It is quite clear now that the process of panel filling was happening in the opposite direction. The earliest carvings at Staraya Zalavruga were small boats participating in whale hunting scenes. They occupied the north and north-east part of the panel. Perhaps, a little bit later carvings appeared in the other parts (south-east and south-west) of the rock panel. They were mainly reindeers and long boats. The reindeer with antlers under the head of right giant animal which was appeared earlier, was itself made on the place of almost destroyed image. So, we can see here unique example of 3 palimpsests.



Копия В.И. Равдоникаса - 1938 г.



Копия Н.В. Лобановой-12005 г.

■ - фигуры, выявленные в 2005 г.

Fig. 12

The next stage of human activity at Staraya Zalavruga is connected with expressive and numerous war scenes in the north-east rock panel and even in the western slope. In several cases these petroglyphs were carved on whale hunting compositions (fig.7). Small footprints scattered everywhere close to war scenes most likely have direct relations to ones. To my mind, anthropomorphous and other original figures (snake) in the western slope could be of the same time.

The final stage of rock art here were famous giant (almost 3 meters) reindeers. They have similar size, shape and motion direction and were made by one master. These unique images have no analogies among the White Sea rock art. The famous Besov Nos “Triad” – Devil, Otter and Fish- comparable with them on size and also the only large figures in Onega sanctuary are considered to belong to the earliest stage (7, p.146–148). In accordance with the new data at Staraya Zalavruga we could suppose their relatively late age, as well.

Thus, at Staraya Zalavruga preliminary it is possible to outline at least three different time rock art stages. What was the rock sanctuary duration on the whole and which time period separated one stage from another one? We can not strictly define it now, but it is obviously that this art was a result of creative activity of many generations living here in the end of Atlantic Period. Fragments of Rhomb-Pit ceramics of this time are found in the highest parts of the Zalavruga I settlement (8). According the radiocarbon and palaeogeographical data, the chronological frames of the White Sea rock art on the whole are within 4 – the edge of 4–3 mill. BC. The obvious traces of the Early Sub-boreal transgression (beginning of the third mill.BC) are visible both in cultural layers of the neighboring sites and on the rock surfaces. During this time Zalavruga was under water and then covered with sand river sediments (9, p.76–84).

Based on high level and stylistic analyses Yu. Savvateyev is inclined to view Staraya Zalavruga as a continuation of Novaya Zalavruga and thus one of the latest groups in Belomorje (6, c.82–85). In my opinion, some quite early compositions are represented here like scenes of sea hunting and probably, other figures. For more reasonable conclusions we need continuation of fieldwork at Staraya Zalavruga.

To conclude, it should be remarked that the potential for the rock art discoveries in the White Sea area is not exhausted yet. Some promising places are on Jerpin Pudas, nameless islands and in the area down to the previous Vyg River bed.

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