

Representations of the Stone Age Anglers about the Sky (Sanctuaries of the Lake Onega)

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Abstract

In this report, the author addresses original symbolic images portraying disc, crescent, and 'half-moon' morphologies, with one or two ray-like lines that are meaningfully directed to one side. These pictures have been incised on the extremities of rocks at capes of the eastern shore of Lake Onega (61°40' n.l. & 36° e.l.), together with depictions of waterfowl, elk, boats, anthropomorphs, etc., and were first discovered over 160 years ago [1848]. These images are attributed to populations of the Pit-Comb Ceramic Culture (end of 5th - middle 3rd millennium BC). The author analyzes these complex symbolic figures, taking into consideration particular visual-graphical, cultural-chronological, natural-geographical, and topographic-astronomical features. The chief focus of this report is in interrelationships between the orientations and functions of the figures, peculiarities of their forms, and azimuthal values calculated on the basis of the directions of the ray-like components of these signs. 62 examples of these symbolic figures have been analyzed. The results of this research demonstrates the connection between the incised figures and moonrise/moonset azimuths in all visible phases on the days of equinoxes and solstices. Of the 62 figures examined, Only eight can be classified as solar symbols. Such a situation therefore may be connected with the contemporaneous existence of a preponderant lunar calendar. Taking into consideration the specific context of the location of the 'sanctuary' on Lake Onega, peculiarities of petroglyph forms, and the probable semantic content of these symbolic figures, the author hypothesizes that one or two radial lines, located on postulated solar and lunar signs, could depict sun and moon paths reflected from the lake surface, and extrapolate sun and moon rising and setting azimuths relative to the water horizon. The primary bodies of the figures reflected peculiarities of form for the observable celestial body. There is sufficient evidence and reason to think that lunar and solar signs of similar type have served as the most ancient of astrolabes. The majority of them were demonstrated to have pointed toward the direction of the positions where stars rose and set on the horizon. Some figures are thought to portray the mutual positions of the sun and the moon at the time of rising and setting on astronomically significant days of year.

Keywords: archaeoastronomy, petroglyphs, symbolic images, Moon, Sun, azimuth, Onega Lake.

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