

## Knut Helskog ANCIENT DEPICTIONS OF REINDEER ENCLOSURES AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT

### Abstract

Enclosures and fences for hunting reindeer are depicted in Late Mesolithic rock art in Alta, northernmost Norway. This technique of hunting is known from the area in the ethnohistoric records, although the extent to which these records represent prehistoric practises and societies is uncertain. Common for both is the topography, through which people and reindeer moved, while climatic differences meant that vegetation zones were slightly displaced and the shore area would have been smaller as the sea level was higher than today due to the Holocene shore-displacement. Other common features are the behaviour, seasonal movements and the physical features of the reindeer. The depictions and their integration with the rock surface is a micro landscape that reflects the hunt and environment as well as other meanings in narratives, cosmology and rituals. The attributes of the reindeer and the presence of bears and other animals indicate that the compositions are as much associated with rituals and cosmology as the hunts themselves.

Keywords: rock art, hunting, reindeer, enclosures, ethno-history, analogy, identity, rituals, symbolism

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### INTRODUCTION

The earliest populations in northernmost Norway settled in the coastal and fjord area between 10000–9500 BC, when the continental glacier had withdrawn from the coast. These were small groups of people and their subsistence was based upon hunting, fishing and gathering in an environment where the land rose fast and there were strong seasonal changes in habitat and biome. The sites are found on terraces on islands and along the fjords (Olsen 1994; Blankholm 2008; Bjerck 2009). By approximately 7000 BC most of the continental glacier that covered Scandinavia had melted and people started to use the resources in the interior (Hood 2012). Sometime between 5000–4000 BC in the northern part of the County of Troms and western part of the County of Finnmark people began to carve figures into rock surfaces (Simonsen 1955; 1961; 1979; Helskog 1977; 1988; 2011; Olsen 1994: 46; Hesjedal et al. 1996; Gjerde 2010). The majority of these figures are found at the World Heritage Sites in Alta at 70° N and 23° E, at the base of

the Alta fjord in the County of Finnmark (Fig. 1) (Helskog 1988).

At six of the panels at Alta, dated between 4800 and 4000 BC, there are depictions of enclosures associated with reindeer and, sometimes, other figures (Fig. 2). It is likely that they depict real physical structures, and they do not occur in the younger carvings (Helskog 2011; 2012a). The evidence we have indicates that, throughout prehistory and the historical period of this area, reindeer was significant – both as a subsistence resource and in myths, stories and rituals, as evidenced by the ethnohistoric record (Vorren 1944; 1998; Simonsen 1961; Tanner, A. 1979; Hultkrantz 1985; Olsen 1994; Furuset 1996; Halinen 2005: 73, 82–4). No physical traces of prehistoric enclosures have been found, however.

Enclosures or corrals might also be connected with control of domesticated animals, but there is no evidence that this could have been the case in arctic Norway prior to the late Iron Age. Evidence from southern Siberia and west of the Urals indicate that decoy reindeer were used in the hunt, and sledge runners suggest that dogs, and



Fig. 1. The general location of the carvings and the surrounding area of western Finnmark, with the general controlled migration routes of the reindeer from interior Finnmark to the coast between the fjords of Alta and Kvænangen (to the west) marked with a dotted line. Partly adapted from Paine 1994 (Fig. 6.3; cf. also Figs. 3.2, 5.7 and 6.2). When not controlled the reindeer would be spread over much of the area between the Kvænangen and Alta fjords during the early summer. The filled circles are areas with rock art, and those named include panels that are contemporaneous with those with enclosures. Those outside Kåffjord and Hjemmeluft are all on boulders and contain from one to ten figures.

perhaps reindeer could have been used as animals of burden and traction during the last centuries BC (Khlobystin 2005: 188–91). Depictions in Alta from the late 5th into the 4th millennia BC of reindeer tied to a rope, two instances of muzzled reindeer, and two scenes where people are shown riding reindeer, indicate the possible use of reindeer as decoys or as beasts of burden and transport. Clear depictions of hunting connected

with decoy reindeer, or of reindeer carrying goods or pulling sledges, are absent. Given the fact that most of this northern area is covered by snow seven to eight months a year, skis and sledges (as well as boats) must have been essential means for transportation (Savvateev 1970; Burov 1990: 393; Sørensen 1993: 107; Vorren 1995; Janik et al. 2007; Gjerde 2010; Janik 2010).

The aim of this paper is to discuss these enclosures and associated activities in light of the ethnohistoric record, to explore how the makers and users might have understood and coped with the reindeer and associated landscapes. The images might represent stories with powers, good and evil spirits and other mythic beings, as well as humans, animals, structures, items and activities. Even though figures might symbolise something else than the prototype depicted, the behaviour, physical features and use of the prototype (e.g. reindeer) might offer some clues about the content of the stories that are being represented. This possibility has been demonstrated in connection with the bear (Helskog 2010b; 2012b) and reindeer (Helskog 2011) images of Alta.

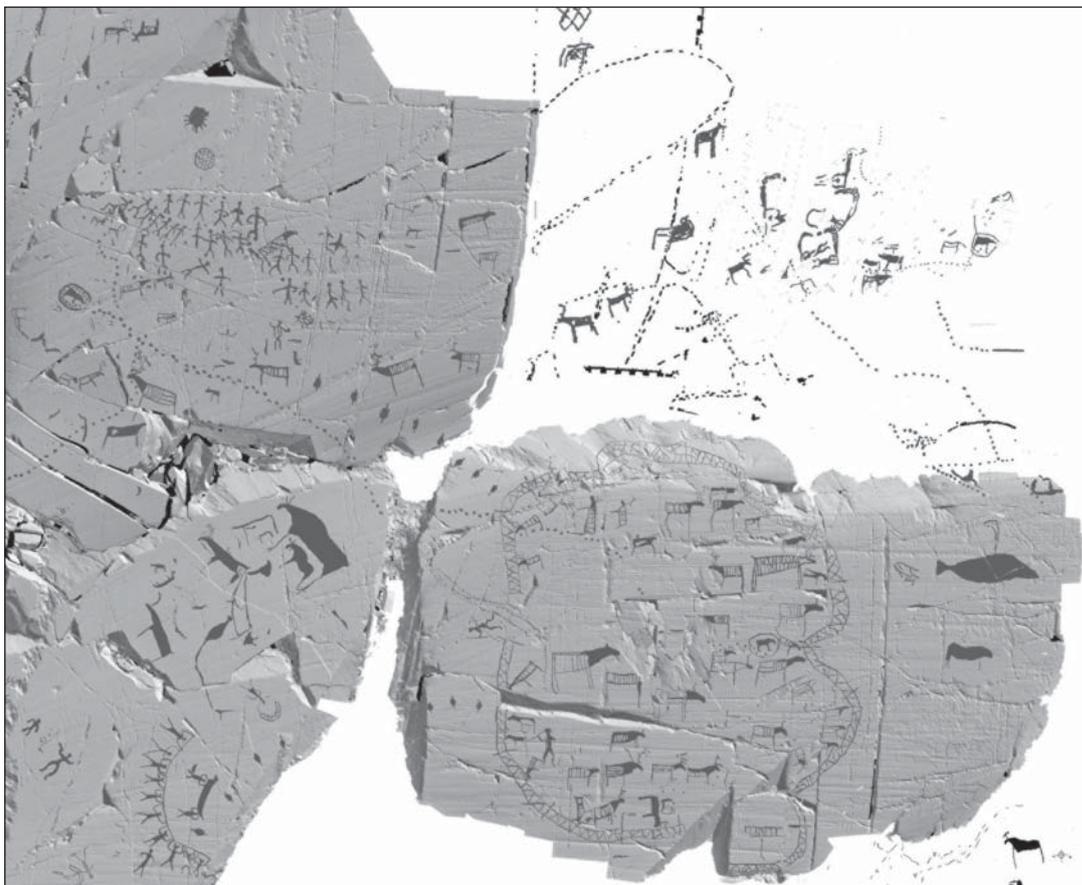
## REINDEER, TIME AND SPACE

One might assume that the behaviour and physical characteristics of the reindeer in the past were the same as at present. The reindeer migrate from the winter pastures in the interior to the shores and coastal mountains during the spring and return to the interior during the fall (Paine 1994: 36–9, Figures 3.2 and 3.3). The animals that migrate from the interior are lean, with poor hides, while the animals that return from the summer pastures are well fed and have good quality hides. This migration follows practically the same topography as around 4000–5000 BC. The approximately 2 °C higher average annual temperature than at the present means that the forest boundary was slightly higher and extended further out towards the coast (Hicks & Hyvärinen 1997). The sea level, which was 22 to 26 m higher than at present, made the coastline along the sides of the fjord more narrow and inaccessible than today. This might mean that the migration routes as well as the location of pastures were slightly different than at present, although the parameters set by large topographic features such as lakes, mountains and mountain passes, and fjords still set the main trails. Similar parameters appear to be

represented in rock art where bears and reindeer are central figures (Helskog 2010a & b; 2011; Gjerde 2010), and when recognized, offer clues on how to understand what some of the rock art might be about.

Another set of clues are given by features in the animals themselves. Adult reindeer are larger than young (two-year old) calves and, in the rock art, might be distinguished from accompanying adults. Antlers indicate age and sex as well as time of the year. They are shed in late winter or early spring and grow during the summer, and there are some differences between young and old animals, as well as female and male animals (Nielsen & Nesheim 1956: 98–105; Paine 1994: 23). The question is to what degree the detailed information in the antlers is intentionally depicted in the carvings. There is a large variety in the carvings but I have not yet tried to perform an analysis

based on the details presented in the drawings published by Nielsen & Nesheim (1956: 98–105), beyond observing the main trends and attributes. Reindeer without antlers indicate late winter/early spring, and animals with larger antlers might indicate both male and female animals from late summer until the antlers are shed from mid-winter (normally the first half) to late winter/early spring. The female animals and year old calves might keep their antlers until or immediately after the females have given birth in the spring. New antlers start to grow in the spring. The size of the antlers might indicate the age of the animal in the sense that large is old and small is young. Herds of male reindeer indicate summer and early fall (before rutting season) (Skjenneberg & Slagsvold 1968: 24–5). Any pregnant animals indicate late winter to early spring when the calves are born. It is a fairly simple equation, perhaps too simple,



*Fig. 2. The large and complicated enclosure at Kåfjord with two rows of figures converging towards the opening, view towards north. ATOS scanned by METIMUR. The figures have been enhanced with Adobe Photoshop. The striation marks are between 2–5 mm wide.*



*Fig. 3. Aerial photograph with the bay of Hjemmeluft/Jiepmaluokta in the centre. Most of the carvings are located around the bay. The fjord of Kåffjord is located to the right. The panels at Kåffjord are outside the photograph to the right. View towards south-southwest. Photo: Knut Helskog.*

but useful when trying to understand when the enclosures were used within the yearly cycle and the perspective of time and place that might be embedded in the figures themselves.

No doubt people in prehistory saw, perceived and had logical explanations for differences in habitat and biomass. Their explanations involving the spirits and the powers of the universe might have been as logical to them as our natural-science explanations are to us. Individuals or groups of people, who conceived the environment as a living organism with spirits, are bound to have recognised physical features according to cultural tradition and beliefs that are different from modern scientific explanations.

#### ETHNOHISTORY

To gain some understanding of how prehistoric rock art figures and landscapes might connect the figures should be identified and understood in relation to season, space, function and associated human behaviours. Obviously, there are many problems associated with such approaches, as pointed out by Smith & Blundell (2004), but

I do not see how plausible arguments can be formulated without drawing upon the ethnohistoric records. Because the rock art in Alta was made by hunter-fisher-gatherers, clues should be searched among hunter-fisher-gatherers who practised driving reindeer into enclosures, barriers or traps. Both communal and individual hunting of reindeer was practised by various peoples occupying the circumpolar arctic, such as the Koyukuk Indians and Nunamiut Inuits of northern Alaska (Clark 1974: 160–5) or northern Canada (Brink 2005), or the Nganasan Samoyeds of westernmost Siberia (Chard 1963; Popov 1964). Judging from the location of most of the pitfall systems and fences in northernmost Scandinavia, communal hunts were undertaken in areas located between the summer pastures on the outer coast and the winter pastures in the inland.

The recognition of the hunting or driving aspect appears to be relatively straightforward, while recognizing religious and social aspects is vastly more complicated. The complex interaction between hunting reindeer and beliefs and rituals, as seen among the Naskapi of northern Labrador (Speck 1935) and the Mistassini Cree (Tanner, A.

1979), or among the Sámi associated with their transition from pre-Christian to Christian beliefs (Rydving 1995), or from hunting to pastoralism (Hultkrantz 1985), are all good examples of this. The obvious lack of ethnographic descriptions that connect with northern rock art makes such interpretations vastly more difficult than purely functional assessments.

Because parts of the Sámi population engaged with the traditional hunting-gathering-fishing way of life longer than any other group of people in northern Scandinavia, they are also the group of people most likely to withhold ideas and practises from prehistoric times. They are the only population in northern Fennoscandia known to practise communal drives of reindeer into fences or enclosures, and pits. Furthermore, as the topography has not changed significantly and the instincts of the reindeer are probably similar to those of animals that lived around 5000–4000 BC, it is to be expected that some of the choices people were faced with at that time were similar to those faced by Sámi a few hundred years ago. Because technology, knowledge, societies and beliefs in the past and the present are different, the information to be gained from ethnohistoric records can only give an indirect understanding.

From the historic record it is well known that communal reindeer hunts were carried out during the spring and fall migrations, and if meat and raw materials were needed individual reindeer would be hunted at any time. This last type of hunting is likely to have been more directed towards individual animals by the use of decoy animals or stalking (Tegengren 1952: 103–4; Schefferus 1956 [1673]: 260–1; Leem 1975 [1764]). An account from late 9th century AD describes that the Sámi kept 600 reindeer and six decoy animals for a Norwegian tradesman called Ottar (Simonsen 1977; 1996; Whitaker 1981), from which it can be inferred that the knowledge and ability of controlling reindeer had existed for some time. The Sámi population in the region lived basically by hunting and fishing and in general it is believed that small scale animal husbandry with sheep and cows was introduced during the late Iron Age and the Middle Ages (Grydeland 1996; Hansen & Olsen 2004: 175–97). Systems of pits and fences for hunting reindeer were used into the late 19th century in Varanger, northern Norway (Vorren 1944; 1962; 1998; Munch & Munch 1998). Reindeer were hunted at the same time as small herds of tamed

reindeer were tended among the Sámi in easternmost Finnmark and Kola Peninsula in Russia as late as the early the 19th century (Tanner, V. 1929: 134, 228). It is unclear for how long the parallel practise of hunting and taming reindeer existed. Nevertheless, that it did exist in historic times makes this information a particular good basis for understanding how the relationship between hunting and animals, landscapes, environments and beliefs could have been. The change from hunting to pastoralism is believed to be connected with the integration to market economies that took place in some areas already during 13th and 14th centuries AD (Sommerseth 2011), the 15th century in some areas (Mulk 2005), 16th–17th centuries in still others (Vorren & Manker 1957: 71–2; Hansen & Olsen 2004: 209) or even as late as the late 19th century in some remote areas of Sápmi (Storli 1993; 1994: 86–90; Andersen 2005: 90; Hedman 2005: 29–30). The transition from hunting to pastoralism might not have been contemporaneous among all the Sámi in northernmost Europe (Hansen & Olsen 2004: 211–4; Mulk 2005). This is a challenging research problem as there is physically no good way to distinguish tamed from wild animals (Grøn 2011) except, possibly, by differences in genetic profiles (Röed et al. 2008; 2011).

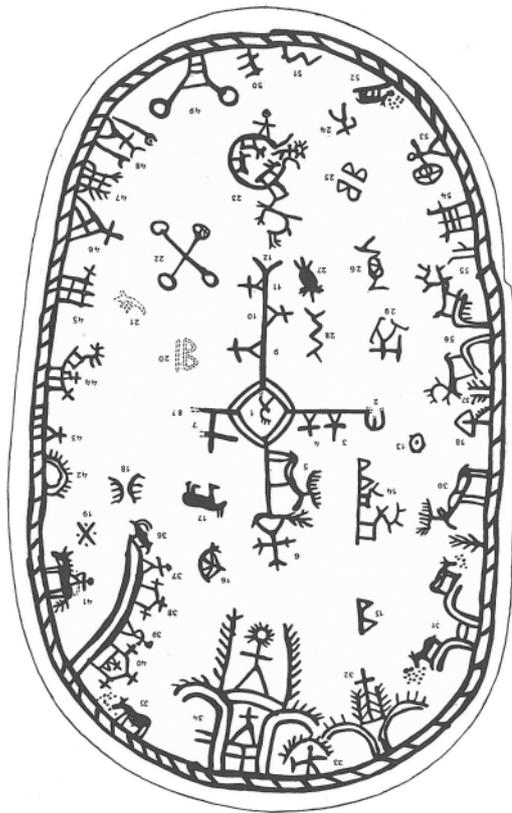
## REINDEER AND SYMBOLISM

The understanding hunter-gatherers have of their surroundings is closely connected to procurement activities because the world as perceived was constituted through their engagement with it, in the course of everyday, subsistence-related practices (Nelson 1983; Ingold 1986; 2000: 59; Jordan 2003). Humans have social relationships with the animals and spirit entities that populate the environment, because they all constitute a seamless web of action between agents, rather than separate realms of nature/culture. This might not mean that all forms of life resided in one world but that the routes of communication and contact between the worlds were many. This pertains to arctic populations such as the Sámi as well as to people such as the Achnar of the upper Amazon, who perceive the natural as being no more real than the supernatural and acknowledge a continuum between human beings and nature's beings. Humans could behave like animals and animals could behave like humans (Descola 1994: 93–7). In essence, the worldwide presence of

spirits as active partners in the decision-making process among hunter-gatherers indicates that this form of communication can represent an old, long-lasting form of belief that is relevant for our understanding of communication and practise among the northern prehistoric hunter-fisher-gather populations.

In a treatise on Sámi religion, Hultkrantz (1985: 23–8) argues that since some Sámi hunted reindeer to the near present at the same time as they practised domestic reindeer herding, their belief system was still much connected to the preceding hunting phase. Therefore, as a means of communication between people and powers/spirits in different worlds to gain favours in relation to hunting and driving reindeer into enclosures, the images of enclosures and reindeer depicted on Sámi ritual drums might add some understanding to the meanings of representations and interaction with the environment (Fig. 4) (Manker 1950; 1965; Helskog 1987). On some drums the world is divided into different parts – the upper, middle and lower worlds – divisions that might be a product of a Christian influence, as the figurative content of the

drums is mixed pre-Christian and Christian. There are regional and individual differences between the drums as there are regional and individual differences between the panels of rock art. No two drums or rock art panels are identical. There are a few figures on the rock art that might have had a drum as a prototype and if so, the drums and rock art may have coexisted. We do not know to what degree or if they were complimentary and if prehistoric drums were ornamented or not. There is no clear temporal overlap between the drums and the prehistoric rock art, the main exceptions being a few rock art figures made in historic time on the Mountain of Aldon (Simonsen 1979) in Varanger, recently discovered newer figures at Reinøya (Tromsø Museum Archives 2005) in Troms, and the engraved figures at Padjelanta in interior north Sweden (Mulk & Baylis-Smith 2001; 2006; Mulk 2004). In essence, there might be continuity in the use of figures in communication from late prehistoric to historic hunter-fisher-gatherers. Given the variation in selectivity of what to depict and not to depict between the rock art and the drums, one might easily be led to conclude that both functioned similarly, even though the rock art panels are stationary and the drums are mobile. The shared belief among historic hunter-gatherers and pastoralists in the European Arctic and Siberia that the worlds of the spirits were a ‘mirror’ of the human world (Holmberg 1987) indicates that it is to be expected that what is depicted on drums contain some similarities to life in the landscape where people and animals normally move. It is obvious that the figures on the Sámi drums only represent a selective part of these worlds, and the variation in use, populations, rituals and myths, seasons and so on, is amply demonstrated on the drums (Rydving 1995: 30–1). There are figures that represent spirits/powers and animal helpers (reindeer), shamans, reindeer, as well as figures directly connected to Christianity such as images of people going to church, and of church buildings. On some of the drums there are even enclosures for reindeer (Manker 1950; Helskog 2011).



*Fig. 4. A Sámi drum with a reindeer corral in the upper middle. In addition, various divinities and animals, as well as boats and structures, are shown. In the centre of the drum, the symbol of Beavi – the sun – has been depicted (Manker 1950: Figure 112).*

## IDENTIFYING THE FIGURES

The production of rock art in Alta continued through five thousand years (Helskog 2000; 2012a). The explanations for this might be many, such as the continuation of a carving tradition irrespective of what the meanings might have been, or they might signal forms of social cooperation and control of resource territories (Hood 1988), boundaries between settlements or groups of peoples (Sognnes 1987; 2001), or mark ritual places in areas of transition between different types of environmental zones (e.g., Bradley 1997). Another possibility is that the carvings mark special places on the shore where communication between the worlds in the universe were performed through rituals (Helskog 1999). Another is simply that the location is in the transition zone between the two large resource areas, inland and the coast, where people from the interior, the fjord area and the coast met to socialise, exchange knowledge and establish partnerships, conduct public rituals, and live during certain parts of the year.

The general emphasis in the rock art is on outdoor forms of life and activities, specifically associated with the largest fauna. These activities, rituals and movements of people and animals are closely connected to the seasonal changes in the landscape. Seasons, events and time should, therefore, be expected to be represented in some of the carvings, although to recognize culturally coded variables thousands of years after they were made, is a difficult task. An example of such variability is how some rock art might be part of ritual preparation conducted in connection with future seasonal hunts (Gjessing 1945: 296–313; Ramqvist 1990), or of thanking the spirits and souls for letting animals be killed. Indeed, both time and space can be recognised based on the known behaviour and physical criteria of some of the animals depicted, and the presence of physical features.

The carvings represent ritual places, although their importance might have changed throughout the year. For example, as people moved between different habitats and landscapes within and between the seasons, the spiritual and ritual connections to the environment are likely to have changed according to both where people were and how they divided space and time into sacred and profane parts (Rydving 1995: 96–108). It is also to be noted that the relatively few hours of daylight during mid-winter does not mean that

winter was a period when carvings were not made. On the contrary, when looking at the ethnographic evidence, mid-winter was a time when households congregated and exchanged or renewed partnerships, traded and conducted major ceremonies and rituals (e.g., Tegengren 1952: 125–7).

Of the two parts, the figures and the surface, it is in the figures that most details can be recognised. For example, recent approaches based on phenomenological ideas of embodiment of human figures, illustrate how some figures might be understood to reflect gender positions in the north Scandinavian Stone Age (Engelstad 2001) or socio-cultural changes in post-colonial South Africa (Blundell 2004). Figures shaped like reindeer and humans that illustrate selective parts and identities in the environment of the makers, can be classified into types and sub-types. Even though the differences between the figures are real, the classification is an archaeological construct, and the question is if the differences signify meanings other than possible prototypes or identities. This is a hard question to answer; the answer might be yes, no or both.

Except for a few geometric patterns it is possible to recognize the prototype of most of the carved figures because they are morphologically similar to animals, humans, cultural objects and structures known today. In this they are similar to figures on the Sámi drums, although the difference is that some drum figures have been identified by informants as referring to other meanings (Mankner 1950; 1965), and the rock art figures obviously have not. Attributes identify, to a certain extent, the rock art figures, their function and possible meanings for the makers and the users, as they do today. For example, the figure of a reindeer can be a reference to reindeer in general, or reindeer as a symbol for something else. If figures were symbols or metaphors in myths and rituals or more profane aspects such as symbols of ownership, power and identity, behavioural aspects of humans and animals as well as the function of the objects and structures might directly or indirectly be referred to in the stories told. Why else choose to repeatedly depict specific sets of figures and details? Attributes are depicted for a purpose, and are clues to understand part of the meanings of the figures. Figures can have several layers of meanings and associations.

The majority of the figures associated with the inside of the enclosures are the object of the

drives, namely reindeer (Helskog 2011). Differences are seen in their body size and shape, the presence and absence of antlers, antler size, or various body patterns, of which some are not natural to the reindeer. In a sense, attributes such as vertical and horizontal line patterns are either socially added marks that embody the animals with special identities, ascribed status or role, or are they simply a way of depicting internal organs, rib bones, spinal cord, etc. In some cases there are body patterns and in other cases the bodies are totally carved out or only outlined. Adding to this the observation that the antlers and sizes of the animals indicate age and sex as well as seasonal differences, the picture becomes complicated indeed. In essence, even if the meaning of these compositions could have been made for purposes other than hunting, seasonality and landscapes, details in the depictions of animals, tools, weapons, and structures might represent associated behavioural and practical aspects. Why else depict so much detail and knowledge. They were meant to be there.

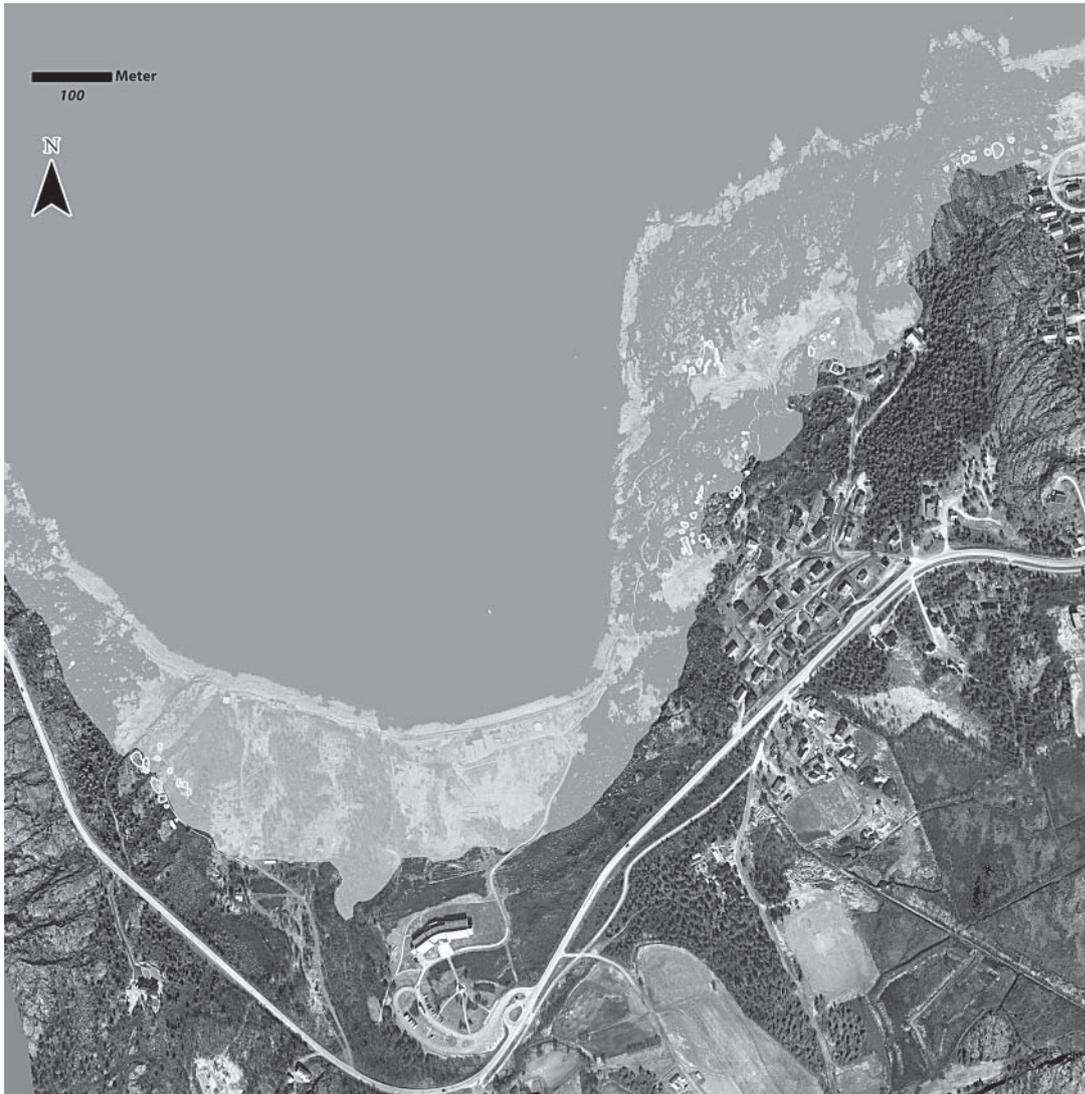
That some of the figures are likely to represent spirits whose powers controlled other animals, forces of nature, life and death and so on, does not necessary mean that all the behaviour of these spirits was unrelated to the behaviour of the model/prototype that gave the figures their basic forms. From this point of view the present knowledge of how fences were made, hunts were conducted and organized and how reindeer behave, provide clues to how people once might have understood the carvings. Hunting and driving reindeer are activities, which presuppose detailed knowledge of the animals and the landscape where they live and through which they move, in order to position the enclosures where the topography would aid to lead them to where the hunters wanted them to go.

Sometimes scenes illustrate hunting, fishing, and even rituals, mythic stories, and sometimes it appear obvious that features in the rock surface were an active part. The problem is to decide if parts of the topography, colours, cracks, and orientation of the rock surface were a part of the representations or not. They might forever be unknown, although some repeated relationships indicate that features on the rock surfaces might represent specific environmental features such lakes or openings between different dimensions in the universe (Helskog 1999; 2000; 2011; Gjerde

2010). Associations such as these, might aid us in understanding how people perceived parts of the environment in which they lived. The observation and argument that features in rock surfaces played a role is not new. Surfaces can be a veil that separates worlds behind and in front of the surface (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990), and cracks might be openings connecting the worlds in front of or behind the rock art panels (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990; Taçon & Ouzman 2004); topographic forms can become physical parts of depicted figures while others might represent features in the depicted landscape (Tilley 1991; Coles 2000; Keyser & Poetschat 2004). Similar functions can be attributed to colours in the rock surfaces (Helskog 1999; Tansem & Johansen 2008), as well as more intangible factors such as sounds (Helskog 1999; Goldhahn 2002) and smell (Bjerck 1995). Parts of or entire panels might represent landscapes, even a specific landscape (Janik et al. 2007), and environments with selective forms of life, objects and environmental features, within the larger surrounding landscape.

The connection to landscape and the outdoor is fairly obvious because the depicted figures and activities point mainly towards outdoor life. Environment and/or landscape are represented in compositions where reindeer are chased into enclosures (Helskog 2004; 2011), although I have not recognized features that refer directly to associated topographic features in the Alta region. The fact that 99.9% of the carvings are oriented according to what is up and down on the rock surface indicates that the makers viewed the movement on the rock as analogous to the movement in the dimension where the prototypes moved. Boats normally have the keel down, human figures stand, birds fly and so on. Some figures, such as a few animals and boat figures that are depicted upside down, intentionally deviate from the normal state of the living object or animal. In between the perpendicular and the upside down position, we find a few figures at Alta that are oriented between the (approximate) horizontal and the vertical axes, such as rows of reindeer moving downwards (one of them at a 90° angle). Those figures that are in an oblique angle might be interpreted as moving up or down on topographic features.

The choice to reproduce prototypes as much smaller figure could both have been practical to reduce the labour involved and to promote the meanings associated with the natural shape, rather



*Fig. 5. The mean tide level at 23 metres above the present mean tide level. The carved panels are encircled in white. Most of the panels would have been located beneath the sea level at this stage, whereas all the enclosures are located above the mean tide level. Photo: © Geovekst.*

than masking the figures to control the recognition of meanings. As such, recognising physical and behavioural characteristics of the reindeer are important clues to approach the question of meanings. These meanings might be as simple as recognising male and female animals, adults and calves or more complex matters such as spirits and stories and rituals. In this sense the figures were and are agents embodied with meanings to be revealed to those who, unlike us, understood the signals. That the figures are not overtly stylized and unrecognisable does not necessarily make

meanings easier to understand, but identifying the prototypes, some specific features and what they do is an opening to try to understand what the makers might have meant by the figures, beyond how people and reindeer behaved and looked.

#### THE ENCLOSURES

Nine enclosures are depicted in the rock carvings in Alta. They are all located between 25 and 22 metres above the present sea level, and were made between approximately 4800–4000

BC. The maximum date is based on the date of the mean tide line slightly below the rock art panels, as this is as old as the carved enclosures could possibly be (Helskog 1988; 2011; 2012a; Gjerde 2010). The minimum date is indicated by the maximum date of the panels from the next period (period III) that is located between 18 and 22 metres above sea level (Fig. 5).

The parts of the landscape with the carvings are located in and above the mean tidal zone, as is the case with practically all rock carvings in Scandinavia associated with hunters, fishers and gatherers (Gjessing 1932: 46–51; Simonsen 1979: 465; Helskog 1999; Ramstad 2000; Sognnes 2001; 2003). Gjessing (1942: 430–1) saw a symbolic connection to water in general. The carvings inside the tidal zone were covered with water for different lengths of time twice a day. Because seaweed normally covers the area below mean tide it is unlikely that carvings were in the lower section of the tidal zone. During winter the contrast between the water and the snow-covered land surface enhances the mean tidal zone as a continuous, long and winding 1.5 m high snow-free submerging/emerging landscape (Fig. 6). The

clean surface between low and high tide in winter, between water and snow, might explain why the carvings in the coastal zone of northernmost Norway are shore bound. The difference between the highest and lowest points in the compositions is rarely more than the height of the mean tidal zone. As the Holocene shore-displacement continued, the shore zones lost direct contact with water and vegetation took hold. The new emerged surfaces were taken into use. Altogether I will argue that this, and the symbolic relationship to water and the worlds of the known universe, is the reason the rock art was made in the shore. The fact that the enclosures are located at approximately the same height above sea level, indicate that they were made within a relatively short period of time.

Three of the enclosures are at the site of Kåfjord and six at sites around the bay of Hjemmeluft (Jiepmaluokta). They can be said to consist of four parts. First, there is the fence itself; second, the figures on the inside; third, the figures on the outside, and fourth, the rock surface onto which the figures/composition were fitted or integrated. The long winding lines might represent lead lines or barriers and, if so, a problem is to decide which



*Fig. 6. The shore landscape at Hjemmeluft/Jiepmaluokta during winter. The mean tide zone covers the area from the sea weed to the snow. It is in this belt that it was possible to make carvings during winter. View towards north. Photo: Knut Helskog.*

figures and surface features might have been connected. To explore the variation in content through space the description begins with Kåfjord to the northwest and ends with the easternmost enclosure at the site of Bergheim I.

### *The enclosures at Kåfjord*

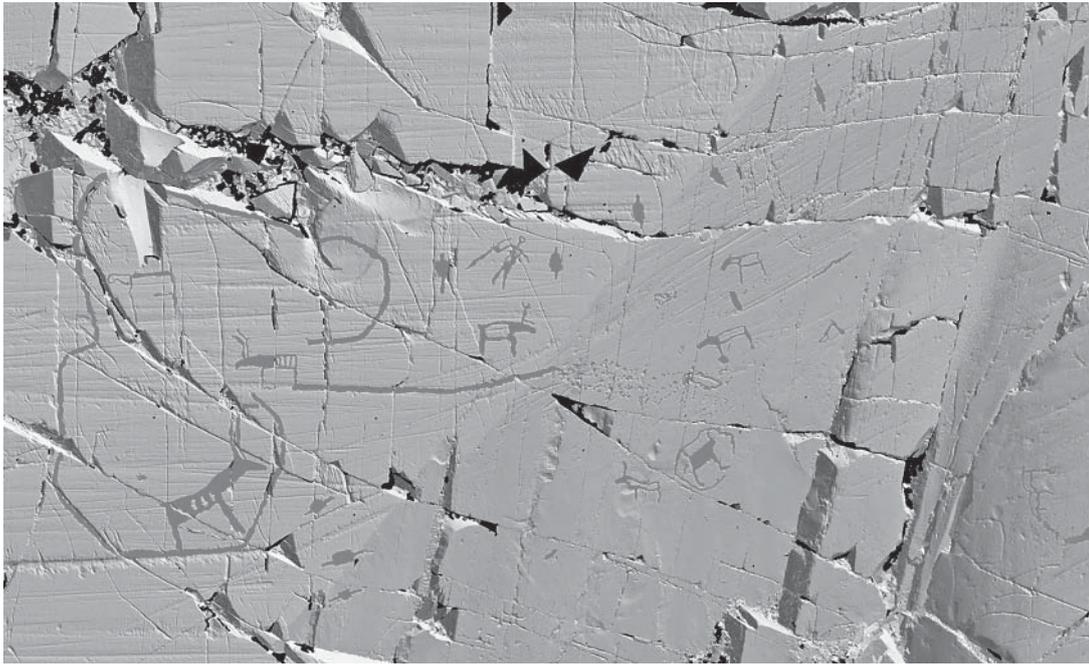
*Enclosure 1* (Fig. 2) is a composite figure in the sense that the fence is depicted by two parallel lines that are connected by short and regularly spaced lines. At set intervals there are longer vertical lines and altogether the fence appears to be standing on poles, like a modern picket fence. The entrance is towards the west and two converging lines of figures (cairns, standing stones or wooden poles) funnel the reindeer into the opening. Sets of reindeer footprints, as if animals walked through some sort of pass above a crevasse in the rock surface, lead into enclosure. Due to the missing part of the enclosure itself and the erosion of parts of the east side, the possibility of an extra opening cannot be excluded.

On the inside of the enclosure there are 34 reindeer figures with antlers of different sizes and shapes, four animals without antlers, and four animals whose antlers are difficult or impossible to distinguish due to erosion. As noted above, missing antlers indicate either the period between shedding of antlers (in the late winter and early spring) or, alternatively, the depiction of young calves. The small- and large-antlered reindeer figures indicate spring and late summer (into winter prior to shedding), respectively. That is, antlers emphasize the two seasons fall/winter and spring/summer, where the largest antlers (which appear in fall) might represent bulls while the contrasting smaller antlers are likely to represent female or young animals. Judging from these associations the enclosure was used during the fall as well as the spring migrations. However, the main drives are likely to have taken place during the fall migrations.

None of the reindeer figures are equal in size. In 35 cases (out of 42), the neck and head region of the animal is totally carved, and 32 of the figures have internal body lines, while in ten cases there are none. Vertical bodylines might represent rib bones, although the number of lines varies and they are, at times, intersected by a low horizontal line. As such they might represent real reindeer with real organs. Due to variations in size, age and colour individual reindeer can be identified,

although one might question if there was need for such knowledge among hunters beyond those animals that were used as decoys, beasts of burden, or representations of ancestors/totem animals/spirits in myths in rituals. Clearly, the reindeer on the inside display much physical variation, as if different individuals/identities were being represented. The human figure brandishing a spear appears to be moving in for a kill, although if the scene depicts a real hunt then there is a real shortage of human participants. A figure that does not seem to belong in the scene is the bear that has walked into the enclosure and entered a den in order to begin hibernation in late fall. The bear might not only represent an animal highly sought after, but also a power associated with death and regeneration (Helskog 2012b). This might explain part of the composition where a bear, in the spring, leaves a den and walks to another den located inside an enclosure designed for killing reindeer (Helskog 1999). It is in the late fall that bears enter their dens to hibernate, and the same season also witnessed the large-scale hunting of reindeer, who return in the fall toward their winter pastures.

Turning to the figures on the outside, the challenge is to decide where to draw a line between figures that might be connected with the enclosure and ones that bear no relation to it. The two lines of figures (cairns?) and the animal tracks leading to the opening are obviously connected. The same goes for the human figure with a spear (?) outside the opening. On the other hand, all of the few animals that are depicted between the cairns are facing away from the enclosure. Two of these animals are reindeer, and the immediate impression one gets is that none of them are obviously connected to the enclosure. The rock surface on which the enclosure is depicted appears to be somewhat detached from the rest of the panel; by a crevasse on the left hand side, by a depression above the enclosure, and by a group of boulders below the carving. The surface continues one metre to the right (east) with a few figures – a large porpoise and a few reindeer. To the northwest there are tracks of bears that extend through the depression and upwards (north) to a composition that involves bears and human figures that hold elk-headed staffs. None of these touch or are oriented towards the enclosure, but the tracks of the bears indicate that they walked close by. As such they might connect to both the enclosure and the bear on the inside.



*Fig. 7. The single line enclosure at Kåffjord, with two rows of figures converging towards the opening, view towards north. ATOS scanned by METIMUR. The figures have been enhanced by colouring in Adobe Photoshop. The striation marks are between 2–5 mm wide.*

*The second enclosure* (Fig. 7) is smaller and less complex than the first enclosure. It is located on a smooth southward sloping surface and depicted by a relatively wide single line. The entrance is towards the east, towards the Alta fjord. On the inside there are three reindeer, of which two have large antlers and the third one has none. The third figure does not appear to be a finished figure. Judging from the size of the antlers, it represents either fall or early winter. The three animals are different in shape, size and body pattern.

Similar to the first enclosure, two lines of figures create a ‘funnel’ into the entrance. The lower line consists of four figures while the upper consists of seven. In the upper line there stands a human figure with a staff or a spear. The reindeer in the entrance stands at the end of a solid line that appears to be an amalgamation of tracks that merged where a part of the surface slopes towards the east. Above the end of the line stands a reindeer facing east, towards the tracks before they merge into a solid path. There are three reindeer, and also a bear that stands inside a den. Stylistically, these three reindeer appear to be similar, even though body shapes are slightly different,

and they appear to be connected with the tracks. Bears, on the other hand, are not hunted in enclosures, but given the relation between the bear and the enclosure in Figure 2, it might be a part of the story narrated. Furthermore, the fact that the bear faces the back of the dens indicates that it entered it in late fall. There are no figures above and to the left of the enclosure. Below there is a small elk figure, and further down some geometric figures and reindeer, but none of these are judged to be connected to the enclosure.

*The third enclosure* (Fig. 8) is located on a surface, which is otherwise flat and horizontal, except for the southern part that extends onto a southwards slope. The opening of the enclosure is upwards and towards the north. Access from the openings to the left and upwards (north) is stopped by a fringed figure and a crack in the rock surface. To the right there is another crack, which has left only a small surface space to the enclosure. The fence itself is depicted by a solid line, as in the second enclosure.

On the inside there are three reindeer with short antlers, which might indicate late spring, while the rest of the reindeer figures indicate the period from early summer into fall. The animals

are shaped differently in the sense that one has an open body and a totally carved-out neck and head, while one has an open body filled with a vertical and horizontal line, and the third one is totally carved out. A fourth animal that might also be a reindeer is pecked totally in contour line and has no indication of antlers. There are also three animal figures that normally would not be expected inside a reindeer enclosure; but then a narrative might not depict a normal hunting situation. These are either seen from above or they are in fact stretched out hides of animals. Two of these are to the right of the opening and their shapes indicate bears. The third animal, positioned in the opening of the enclosure, is much larger and gives an impression of being modelled on a smaller fur animal. In addition, there are some lines where I have not been able to recognise a prototype. The figures appear deliberately placed inside the enclosure since none of them overlap with the fence itself.

On the exterior of the enclosure (to the south) there are 8 or 9 reindeer. One of them is a bull, while the others appear to be females. Five of the animals are totally carved out while the other four are different with regard to body pattern, size and antlers. The antlers indicate that the time is summer or fall. As with enclosures 1 and 2, there are tracks that lead to a bear in a den. On the right hand side of the enclosure, there is a halibut on a line, and above it an anthropomorphic figure somewhat like the ones found at the two other enclosures at Kåfjord.



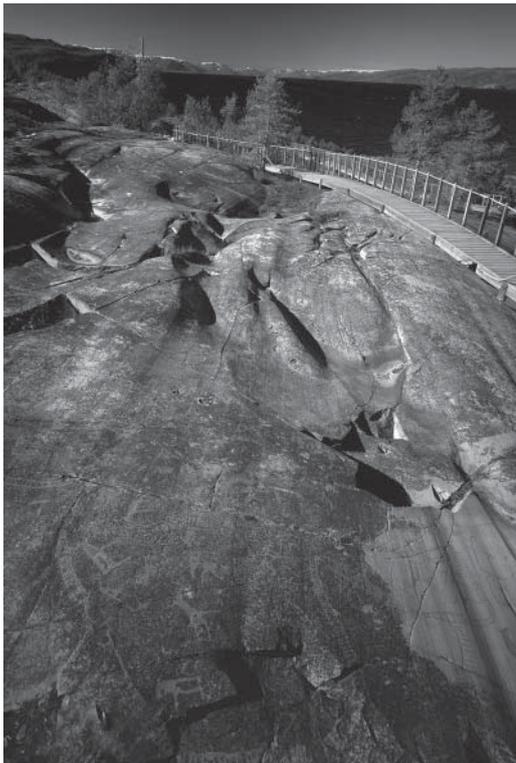
The Kåfjord panel is located 2.5 km from the panels in Hjemmeluft; across the open water of the mouth of Kåfjord, a side fjord on the west side of the Alta fjord. The panels in both areas can be regarded as separate entities, although one should be aware of the fact that transport on water in this region varies from fast to impossible, depending on weather conditions. Paddling would take approximately an hour at its best, while to walk around a very steep fjord and to cross the two rivers along the route would have taken a whole day, although time might not have been of essence in reaching the site.

If the figures were part of stories associated with rituals belonging to the same group of people, they can be regarded as three integrated entities, each of them telling different stories where reindeer, bear, people and the natural season play a part. This is in a way similar to the stories connected with the compositions with bears (Helskog 2012b), but viewed from the perspectives of the enclosures. The enclosures have the same basic 'undulating' shape. Even though the fences themselves are depicted in two different ways, this does not mean that they represent anything more than a wooden construction, as is the case with the first enclosure. Alternatively, there could also have been fences of stone, and if so, traces of these might not have survived millennia of erosion.

The amount of work invested in the two enclosures, where rows of cairns lead to the opening, would have been larger than in the one without cairns. One question, therefore, is if there was a functional or seasonal difference between the two; another question is if the differences were more of a symbolic character than directly associated with the hunt. The large enclosures may simply have been associated with several groups of people who cooperated and shared the catch, while the small enclosures may have been used by small groups of people. Interestingly enough, the variety of the animals inside the largest enclosure is not only largest of all, but there also appears to be a spatial difference in the positioning of the animals and

*Fig. 8. The single-line enclosure with an outside barrier at Kåfjord, view towards north. ATOS scanned by METIMUR. The figures have been enhanced by colouring in Adobe Photoshop. The striation marks are between 2–5 mm wide.*

their body patterns. The variety in the shapes and body patterns of the animals gives them different identities, and also integrates symbolic dimensions, which connect the hunt with bears as well as human figures – the makers and the users of the art. A hunt is an art of taking life, and taking life probably required communication with spirits and powers to make sure that the killing and treatment of the animals was carried out in a way that was respectful, maintained the honour of the hunters and the animals, and ensured the regeneration of game species. The three enclosures could have been connected to a single group of people although the differences indicate some variation in the stories and symbolism, possibly related to different seasons and occasions. These groups might have been other than those who connected to the rock art across the bay, or the figures on both sides of the bay were used by all, while individual group identities were maintained. This discussion will continue following the presentation of the enclosure around the bay of Hjemmeluft.



*Fig. 9. View of the Bergbukten I -panel towards north, with the large reindeer enclosure in the foreground. The carvings are enhanced with paint. Photo: Adnan Icaġic.*

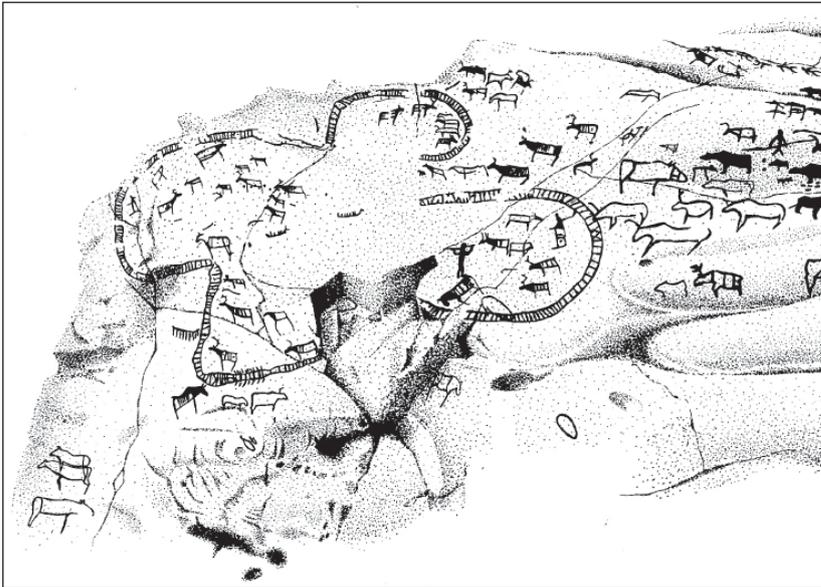
### *The enclosures in Hjemmeluft/Jiepmaluokta*

The enclosures are located at five panels, three on the west side of the bay and four on the east side.

#### *A. The west side*

*The fourth enclosure* (Figs. 9 and 10), located on a slightly sloping surface at the panel of Bergbukten I, is constructed similarly to the large enclosure at Kåfjord (Fig. 2), but with three significant differences. Firstly, this enclosure has two openings, a closed entrance towards the inland (south) and an open entrance towards the coast (north). Secondly, the fence lacks the vertical lines that indicate that it was held up by regularly placed poles. And third, there are no lines of figures that create a funnel into the opening. A section of the surface with a part of the fence has been broken off. It must be noted that the fence, on both sides, opens inwards and creates a short funnel towards the centre of the enclosure. This flexibility indicates that the fence was light and made of wood. A fringed figure attached to the outside might represent a barrier to prevent the animals from turning back. On a part of the lower fence there are seven short, almost perpendicular lines, pairwise attached to both sides. These could also damage reindeer that ran along the fence. On the inside there are 35 figures – 29 reindeer, two elk (*Alces alces*), one human figure with a spear against a reindeer, two small boats, and what looks like a footprint from a right foot. Further back, we find a print from a left foot, as if somebody had walked on the surface.

The undulating shape of the enclosure has created four ‘pockets’ in which the reindeer have congregated. The absence of antlers on three figures indicates late winter/early spring (or a group of young calves). Also, the body of some of the animals features a pattern of vertical and horizontal lines, while some are depicted without any internal patterning. In essence, there is a pattern of individuality in all of the four ‘pockets’. The ‘pockets’ might have functioned as sections where it would be easy to confine the animals for the kill. The two elks are located in separate ‘pockets’, and in the centre there are two small boats with a head of an elk in the prow. The single human figure armed with a spear against a reindeer stands in the lower right. The sole figure that overlaps the fence is a right footprint of a human being, in the

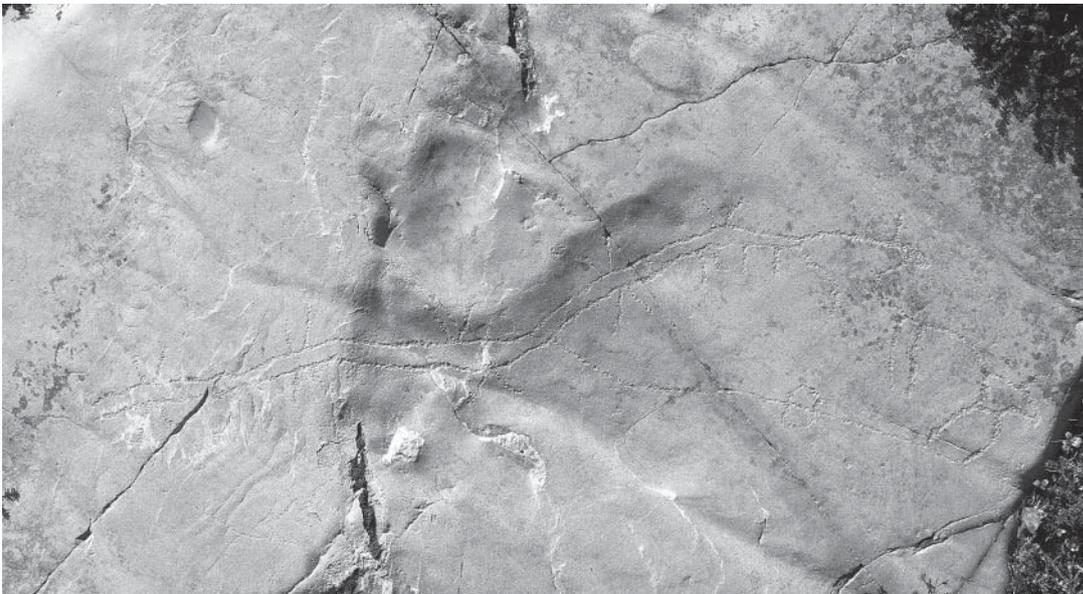


*Fig. 10. Perspective drawing of the large and complicated enclosure at Bergbukten I in Hjemmeluft/Jiepmaluokta. To the right of the opening towards north there appear to stand a muzzled reindeer. Note the closed opening on the left (south) side of the enclosure. The variation of size of the animals is like those at the other enclosures. Drawing: Ernst Høgtun.*

lower right of the scene. This figure is located a step forward a left foot print from a left foot further down, outside the enclosure. In the northern entrance to the enclosure, four reindeer are on their way in and their antlers indicate that the period is summer or fall. The different morphological features indicate that these reindeer have also been given separate identities.

As at Kåfjord, especially the first enclosure, a composition with bears, track and dens is located

on the outside of the enclosure. The dimension of time from spring to fall dens, with tracks 'wandering' on the rock surface, is basically similar. In addition, above the enclosure slightly to the right, human figures are depicted in some sort of a procession, and there is also reindeer, a pregnant bear (summer-early winter), bear tracks and a hunter. This scene is somewhat similar to, but perhaps less complex than, the composition described above and associated with the largest enclosure at Kåfjord.



*Fig. 11. The enclosure at Bergbukten IVA in Hjemmeluft/Jiepmaluokta. Photo: Knut Helskog.*

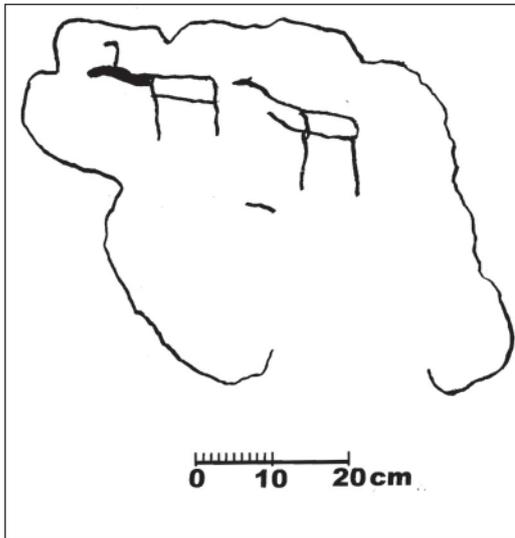


Fig. 12. Tracing of the small enclosure at Bergbukten VII in Hjemmeluft/Jiepmaluokta. View towards west. Drawing: Knut Helskog.

Below the enclosure there are reindeer and elk, and a dolphin that swims towards a ‘whirlpool’ formed by a natural formation in the rock surface. With the exception of the elk, the morphology and shape of these animals, and a group of reindeer to the right of the enclosure, are more similar to the majority of the figures from the period between 18 and 22 metres above sea level. That is, they might not be connected with the enclosure. An obvious problem is to decide if all of the figures of the panel or only a part of them are connected: where does the story begin and end? It has been suggested that the constellation of animals represents a coast/inland dichotomy (with boats representing the inland) connected with rituals and control of resources (Hood 1988).

*The fifth enclosure* (Fig. 11) is on the panel known as Bergbukten IVA, immediately to the north of Bergbukten I. The fence is depicted by a single line that forms a long narrow corridor that leads to an open room. Short lines perpendicular to outside of the corridor might represent poles in the fence or barriers to prevent the animals from escaping the corral. If they represent poles on a light wooden fence, there would have been a possibility to open or narrow the entrance corridor. The beginning of the corridor is fitted between quartz crystals on a slightly uneven surface, while the surface of the

larger room at the end is more even. Two animal figures are integrated in the fence-line on the upper right side. Given their small antlers, they are here interpreted as reindeer. The integration of animals into the fence itself is unique and gives an impression of a mythological story. On the lower part of the enclosure, the fence passes through – or is integrated with – a small circle (a footprint?). However, there are no figures in the immediate vicinity that could be associated with the footprint.

*The sixth enclosure* (Fig. 12) is on a small panel (Bergbukten VIIA) immediately south of the large enclosure at Bergbukten I. It is marked as a fine single line with an opening towards the fjord (east) and downwards on the surface. On the inside there are two reindeer, one with antlers and carved out head and neck and the other without, and both of them without any patterns in the body. The presence and absence of antlers indicate, respectively, summer to late winter, and early spring. A metre further down on the rock surface there are two reindeer; otherwise there are no other figures in the vicinity.

In some respects these three enclosures are similar to those in Kåfjord in the sense of numbers, and that one is large and complicated with a variety of identities and two are less complicated. They are different in shape and content.

#### B. The east side of the bay

*The seventh enclosure* (Fig. 13) is located on a small east-facing surface at the top of the panel known as Ole Pedersen I. The main section is oriented towards the west-northwest (Fig. 14). The fence is depicted with a single line. Inside the enclosure there are nine animals of which one is a reindeer where the hind part is connected to a ‘circle’ as if a pool of blood, a lake or something else. There are six more reindeer and two that might represent bears as well as reindeer/elk (*Alces alces*). On the outside the enclosure, to the west and on the highest part of the panel, there are only figures of bears and bear tracks. The shape of the two ambiguous animals inside the enclosure is similar to some of these bears. Again it seems as if there is connection between corrals, reindeer and bears in myths and rituals. Bears also play a central part in the entire panel (Fig. 14) (Helskog 2012b).

*The eighth enclosure* (Fig. 15) is located at the panel of Bergheim I, to the east of the previous panel. The main part of the panel slopes towards

the east (Fig. 16) but the surface with this particular enclosure is above the top and slopes towards the west. It is depicted with a single broad line and is open towards the west. Outside, to the south of the entrance and perpendicular to the fence, there is a short single line that might be a barrier to prevent the reindeer from turning back along the outside of the fence. The rock surface is strongly eroded and there might have been another opening towards the south. There are six reindeer inside the enclosure, of which three lack antlers; one has large antlers and the others have small, while the sixth animal is too eroded to be sure if it once had antlers or not. The animals without antlers indicate late winter/early spring prior to the growth of antlers, while those with antlers indicate the period from summer to late winter. On the outside, in front of the opening, there stands a reindeer with large antlers, perhaps a male. Above, there is another reindeer, and on the top a possible snow-shoe and beyond them, more reindeer and another possible enclosure.

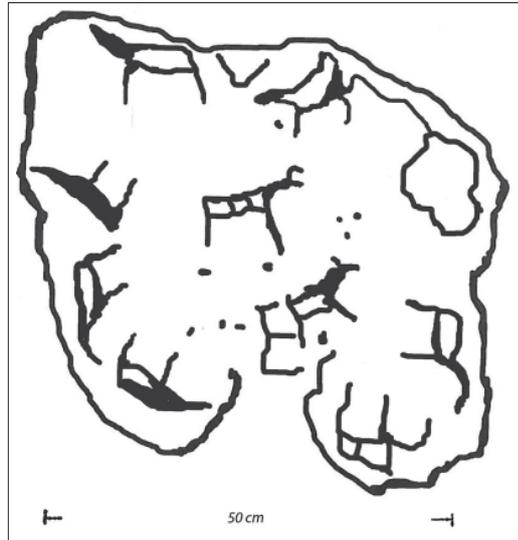


Fig. 13. The enclosure at Ole Pedersen I. Note the different shapes of the figures. Those on the lower left might also represent animals other than reindeer. Drawing: Knut Helskog.

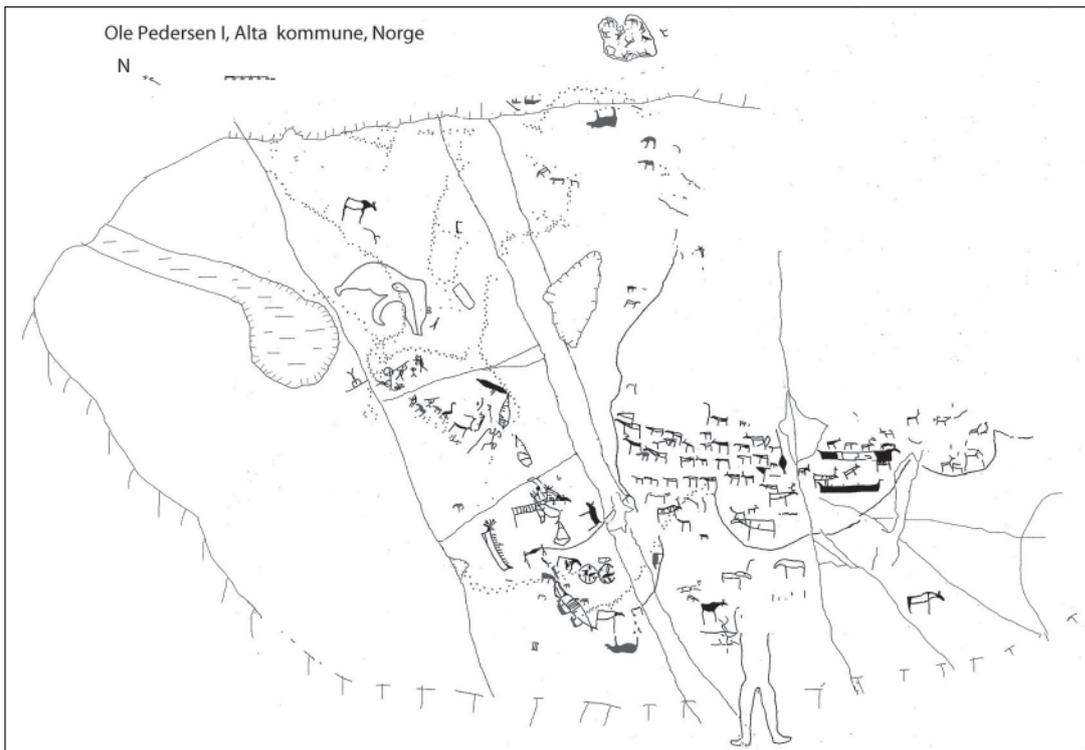


Fig. 14. Tracing of a part of the panel Ole Pedersen I in Hjemmeluft/Jiepmaluokta where solid long lines forms a semi-circular 'barrier' for a large herd of reindeer. There is an opening towards south. In the opening there are bears, a humpback whale, elk and human figures. In a way this is a combination of figures somewhat similar to that at the two largest enclosures (Figs. 2 and 10). Drawing: Knut Helskog.

*The ninth enclosure* (Fig. 16) is located towards the top of the Bergheim I -panel, which slopes towards the east and lies opposite to enclosure number eight. The fence is depicted by a single line. The rock surface is heavily eroded but it looks as if the enclosure might have had two entrances. This is the only enclosure without recognizable figures on the inside. On the outside, on the slope, there are several reindeer including a herd of eight on the very top. Down under there are, among others, 14 snow-shoes connected with lines, as if depicting movement through space and time, or some sort of a barrier.

Seen as a whole, the enclosures share features and content, even if none are identical in size, inside and outside content, or orientation. This might mean that they could have been used by all people at different occasions. Or it is possible that the panels on the northwest side of the fjord adhered to different groups of people than those located further south, on the west side of the fjord? Or are the differences seasonal? Moreover, the panels on the western side of Hjemmeluft are different from those on the east side, and the

differences between the panels on both sides are not the same. No two panels are identical and all of them illustrate individuality and differences. The enclosures are integrated with this overall complex, interwoven and fluid pattern.

#### BARRIERS, LEAD LINES OR...?

On three of the panels on the east side of the bay, we find carved long lines that might represent a kind of curved barrier. At the Ole Pedersen I -panel (Fig. 14), the lines lead into a funnel-shaped opening blocked by a large humpback whale and seven bears, and also by two human figures that hold onto an oblong object at the end of one of the circumscribing lines. It is a complex panel consisting of a variety of figures and it is not clear which figures are associated with the lines. The eastern section of the Ole Pedersen 8 -panel (Fig. 17) is enclosed by a thick solid line on three sides. It ends where the surface is relatively horizontal. On the inside there are 24 reindeer and six human figures, and in the open section towards the west, there is a bear with a cub that has walked out of



*Fig. 15. Photograph of a single-lined enclosure at Bergheim I in Hjemmeluft/Jiepmaluokta. The faint and strongly eroded figures were chalked to enable tracing and photographs to be taken of the entire composition. View towards east-northeast. Photo: Knut Helskog.*

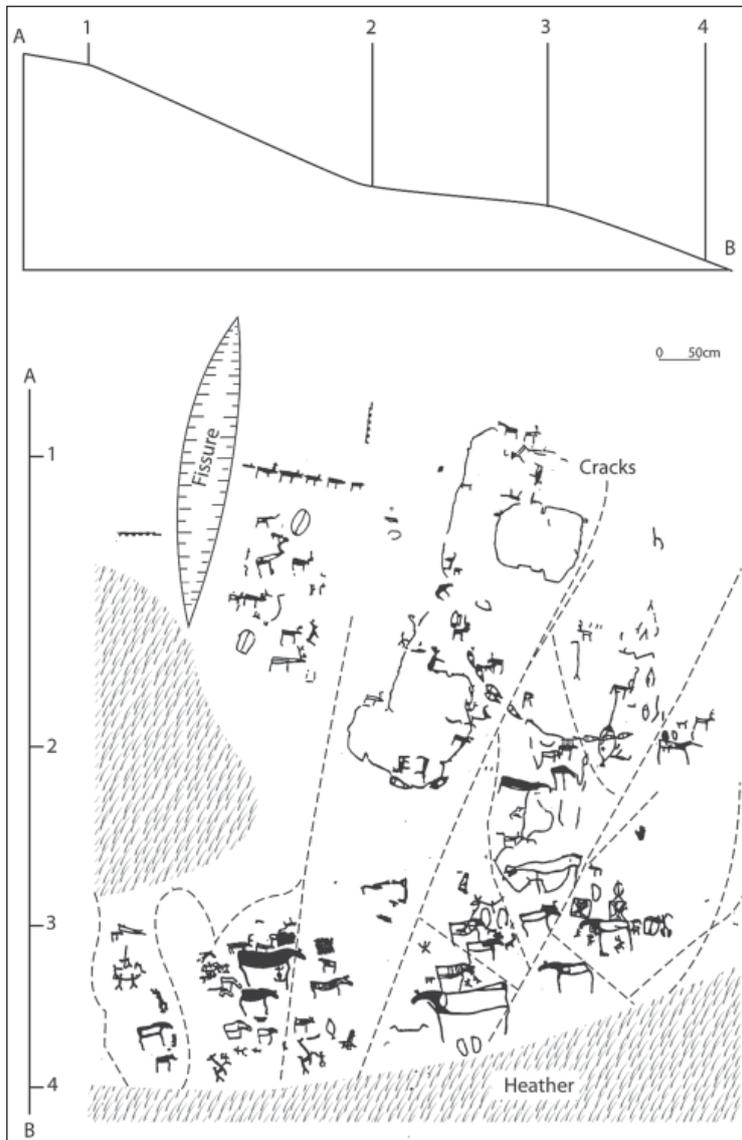


Fig. 16. Graphic presentation of the eastern part of the panel Bergheim I, view towards north-northwest. Drawing: Knut Helskog. Graphics: Ernst Høgtun.

a crack in the rock surface. As in the enclosures, there are reindeer where the body is completely carved out, as well as those with internal body lines and those that carved in contour lines. All of them have antlers, which indicates the time from summer into winter. One of the human figures appears to hold a spear, while the remaining five are unarmed. Two of these give the impression of being a couple, perhaps with a child to the right. The larger of the two in the lower centre has partly a non-human shape, or it is incomplete. The rock surface to the left (north) and in front of the line is vertical, while the two figures to the left are on a more gentle slope. To the west there are no figures

before the surface slopes downwards. In a sense, the line and content is similar to an enclosure, with reindeer, human figures and bears but the opening is too large to be conclusive.

The last case is at Bergheim I, where lines connect a row of snow-shoes as much as confine reindeer (Fig. 16). The lines both connect and separate, and viewed against enclosure two (at Kåfjord), where tracks of reindeer amalgamate into one solid line, it is possible that the line also represents a path created by walking reindeer and people. It might be lines that symbolise the connection and space between places in stories as well as real life.



Fig. 17. The line that is enclosing the eastern part of the panel Ole Pedersen 8. Drawing: Knut Helskog.

#### SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

In Kåfjord, there is no uniformity in design, content and orientation of the openings of the enclosures. In practise, one would expect that the orientation of the openings would have been in the general direction from which the reindeer migrated, because to turn herds of animals against the direction of their instinctual movement might not be an easy task. In this way, if the landscape on the rock surface associated with the enclosures parallels that of the landscapes in the surrounding environment, the two enclosures with barriers converging into the opening can be said to represent spring and fall respectively. If the landscapes are integrated, one might expect that the figures in the rock surfaces, at least in some ways, have a relationship to the life in the surroundings, even to the level of orientation. On the other hand, if the landscapes on the panel are separate entities from the surrounding landscapes, one would expect that the openings would be oriented in relation to the local landscape seen in the rock surface. Of these two alternatives, if humans and animal spirits socialised and there were some integration of the worlds of the two, one might expect that the one had respect for the other as in the first alternative. Here I must point out that the composition of enclosure in Figure 5 and the wandering bear do strongly indicate that people

visualised a world that had at least three parts, one above, one in the centre (where the rock art is and people and animal live) and one under the ground (Helskog 1999).

The situation of the second group of enclosures (on panels Bergbukten I, IVA and VII) is somewhat similar to that at Kåfjord 2.5 km to the north-northwest across the fjord. There is one large and complicated enclosure (Figs. 8 and 9), and one smaller, less complicated enclosure (Fig. 10), and one that integrates animals and an oval figure (footprint?) into the fence. The large and complicated enclosure has two openings, one to the south for the spring herd and the one to the north for the fall herd. On the inside there is a person with a spear, similar to the figure at the large panel at Kåfjord. In essence, the two largest enclosures in Alta are in themselves fairly similar with some variation in the associated figures. In addition, similar to the large Kåfjord enclosure, there is associated a composition where the bear plays a major role and appears to wander between different parts of the understood universe (Helskog 1999). In essence, the understanding of the main divisions of the universe might be recognized both in Kåfjord and in Hjemmeluft. The opening on one of the smaller enclosure is towards the shore and the water, while the opening of the corral with the long corridor is oriented towards the inland, the south.

## THE HUNT, THE FIGURES, THE RITUALS AND THE POWERS

Summing up the evidence (the seasonal indicators in the carvings and indirect ethnographic, environmental and ethological evidence), there are reasons to suggest that the carvings were made and used at specific occasions several times of the year. Seen in the perspective of communal reindeer hunting, the appropriate times for such communal public rituals would have been during the spring and fall, or if gathering for other reasons in periods when communal procurement activities were few, during mid-winter. It is implicit that the people possessed the social organisation needed to organize the drives and distribute the catch between the participants. In this respect, the small number of human figures associated with driving and controlling reindeer into the enclosures indicates that the compositions are not entirely realistic depictions of communal drives, but only represent some select scenes. The selected human figures enacting in the composition represent individuals powerful enough to 'delete' the others from the composition and, as such, they might represent humans with special status, or spirits/powers, who control that all is happening according to the presiding rules.

Hunters would normally use enclosures to catch reindeer during the spring and fall migrations from inland to the coast and vice versa. As such, the depicted enclosures and the rock surface might represent the landscape between the inland and the coast. The fact that two of the enclosures have openings in two opposite directions indicate a location where reindeer were driven into the enclosures from opposite directions, as from the inland during the spring and the coast during the fall. In these cases the enclosures identify the associated part of the panel as a spring or fall landscapes, while there are no recognized patterns in the surfaces themselves that would identify the landscapes (or environmental zones) according to geography and season.

The human figures, for example, are represented basically in two ways. The first is a simple stick figure holding a staff/spear or bow and arrow, and the second is one that is positioned in relation to the reindeer and the enclosures. Clearly, some of the human figures in the compositions are positioned in ways that suggest a hunting situation as well as the social position of a hunter, human

or spirit. For example, on the inside of the two largest enclosures (Figs. 3, 9 and 10) there is a single human stick figure with a spear. On the outside of both enclosures, where lines of figures lead into the opening (Figs. 3 and 7), there is a human figure with a spear/staff, as if guarding the opening. In a sense, it is the positioning of the human figures in relation to the enclosures and reindeer and the spear/staff that identify them to what they might represent. The spear is the only weapon depicted that is used to control or kill animals inside the enclosures, while the bow and arrow is only connected to the hunt of reindeer outside the enclosures. In four cases, no obvious human figures are associated with the enclosures, and in one case there appears to be neither reindeer nor human figures. This type of argument, based on content and positioning, is in contrast to Blundell's study (2004), who explains the social role of figures in South African rock art by associated historic and ethnographic records – a type of records that is not available for these much older northern figures. That is, it is a matter of recognising social phenomena in the figures from biological or other features, and the activities in which the figures are engaged.

Morphological variation between the reindeer figures indicates differences in age and sex and seen from ethological traits, implicitly where they might be at different times of the year. In essence, features in the animals give them separate identities although the enigma is to solve if other identities might be represented besides age and sex. For example, the line patterns that are carved inside the bodies of some animals appear to represent cultural rather than natural features. This, in addition to the differences in the outline of the animals, points toward a large degree of individuality, which appears to be culturally defined. Given that what is represented might be a mixture of natural features (females, bulls, calves) and cultural traits connected with beliefs, myths or rituals at different times of the year, the representations of the animals also embody social phenomena.

The similarities between the enclosures and associated panels indicate they are a part of the same system of organization of hunts and beliefs, even though the compositions and the figures on the panels display numerous differences. If people from all the three major geographic zones (coast – fjord – inland) met in the base of the Alta fjord, these differences could very well reflect

both identity differences and cohesion between groups of people

The two reindeer that appear to be tied are not substantial evidence of reindeer used as animals of burden and decoys. The human figures on the back of a reindeer at two of the early sites might also be held as evidence, but might equally represent a mythic story like those depictions, at other places, of human figures on the back of elk or deer. For evidence, we would need depictions of tied animals with hiding hunters and approaching wild reindeer, and reindeer pulling sledges or carrying goods. Furthermore, how to decide there was a need for enclosures to keep control of decoy animals or animals for burden and transport, and if so, how large would such enclosures need to be? Present ethnographic evidence from Siberia demonstrates that when tamed, animals were relatively easy to control without enclosures (Grøn 2005), although they tend to mix with wild animals if let go. In essence, the problem is not how to present a discussion on the introduction of reindeer pastoralism and associated social ramifications based upon ethnographic and historic sources, as done by Laufer (1917) and Hatt (1919) more than 90 years ago. The problem is how to produce supportive archaeological evidence in support of this narrative (Grøn 2011).

People must have had intimate knowledge of the animals' behaviour at various times of the year, and good social and respectful relationships with the animals and the powers that ruled them. Some of the human or nonhuman figures in rock art might represent some of these powers. The human figures might also reflect some form of socially constructed role, exemplified by the two human figures that control the entrance with a staff/spear and the two on the inside of the corral holding a spear (Figs. 4 and 9). In all likelihood, they symbolise humans or non-humans of a stature related to the control and killing of reindeer. Similarly, the full potential of socially constructed morphological features in the body of the reindeer can only be 'fully' understood when compared with the rest of the contemporaneous figures in the area. If the humans socialised with the animals (Nelson 1983; Ingold 2000), then we might learn something about the socialisation between humans and animals by analysing differences in morphologic features and contexts. For example, look at the enclosure in Figure 7, where the reindeer at the end of the solid 'track-

line' in the opening of the enclosure is an adult animal, apparently a bull, while the few animals that congregate at the exterior end appear to be young females or calves (judging by the small antlers), as if the older males are leading them into the enclosure. In addition there is the human figure with a spear (?) that appears to oversee what is happening. What this might mean is another problem, but this literal interpretation of the figures describes parts that are socialising (interacting) in the event itself. In this way, the sum of all the features associated with each enclosure makes each of them unique. Even if humans might have believed that socialising with the souls/spirits/powers of the reindeer could lead the reindeer to let themselves be driven into the depicted enclosures, killed or even tamed, the ethnographic evidence combined with the instinctual behaviour of the reindeer also tells us that intimate knowledge of the behaviour of the reindeer – of how, why and where they moved through the landscape – was significant for positioning the enclosures in the most advantageous places for catching the maximum number of animals. These places might implicitly be represented in the panels but there are no characteristics in the rock surface that have been recognized as places in the surrounding landscape. In a sense, the different parts of the rock surfaces are as individual as the different parts of the surrounding landscape.

In essence, the variety of enclosures, possible drive lines and barriers, illustrate a range of solutions connected with hunting reindeer between the inland and the outer coast. It is a complex and many-faceted undertaking, of which only parts are represented in rock art. The variety of rock surfaces where figures were made reflects not only the fact that no two surfaces are identical, but also that the makers chose specific surfaces to illustrate the landscape/place in which the activity was undertaken. From the beginning, the choice was limited, as the landscapes to be represented had to be located at select places in the shore, in the zone delimited by the vegetation/snow on land and the seaweed located below the mean tide. On the surface, inside the mean tidal zone, there is no permanent life except for that represented by the rock art. In a sense, life is introduced into a zone between high and low tide, and thereby forms a bridge between the two. At the same time, these zones were associated with water, inundated periodically by the fluctuating

tides, exposed to 24 hours of daylight in the summer and to practically 24 hours of darkness during mid-winter and, as such, very much alive. During winter, the tidal zone was a continuously snow-free long winding landscape. At high tide the zone and the figures were covered by water, and the reindeer enclosures and associated activities and landscape were, alternatively, connected with the world under water and the one above. This was, of course, not the case with the location of the enclosures into which the reindeer were driven, but the location of the carvings indicates that a landscape could connect to different worlds. The landscapes in the shore were miniaturised and multi-layered, all was present in the same area at the same time or periodically, even though they existed in different dimensions and connected at specific occasions and places.

The positioning of the depictions move us closer to understanding how the makers of the rock art understood and coped with the environment and landscape in a context of driving reindeer into enclosures several thousand years ago, because they are the only prehistoric evidence that exist of this method of trapping reindeer. If size and content are significant, then the drives varied in size, perhaps from that of a larger community involvement to only a few participants. In this connection it is likely that the depictions are a part of a system of communication with souls of the animals and/or powers that not only controlled the animals, but was needed for a successful hunt given that humans treated them with the appropriate respect.

We cannot know if prehistoric peoples thought the landscape was inhabited by powers controlling animals and everything else. But it is likely that spirits were perceived as being present, and that some topographic and geological features were perceived as non-human actors to be respected and feared. This type of assumption is solely based upon our understanding of the ethnohistoric record, as are much of the conclusions drawn about prehistoric hunter-fisher-gatherers. There are ample ethnographic examples of such beliefs associated with the indigenous population of northern Scandinavia (Vorren & Manker 1957) and other regions of the world. Seen from these carved rock surfaces there are features and figures that might have represented such powers, although to pinpoint them is difficult, perhaps impossible, even though some figures have features that are clearly not human. It

is often possible to differentiate between the human figures based on morphological attributes, activities in which they are engaged, relationship to other figures and their positioning on the rock surfaces. It is also likely that these embodied differences signal their status and role, such as between the few guardians/hunters inside and outside the enclosures. There were clearly some form of acquired role and status differences between the people, as well as differences between the powers and spirits with which the humans communicated. Similarly, some morphological differences between reindeer signal both age, sex and season, as well as special identities given by a variation of body patterns. However, I am not prepared to draw any single conclusion as to what the identities mean, such as ownerships, clans, spirits or special controlling powers.

The complexities and variation of the enclosures and the associated figures such as human figures, reindeer, bears and boats and their integration with the rock surfaces point towards complex sets of stories and rituals in the communication between humans, and humans and other than humans. The enclosures as a central part indicate a connection with preparing and conducting the hunt and, thereafter, distribute meat, hides, sinew, intestines, antlers and bone; whatever people at that time consumed and used. Enclosures indicates the killing of many animals in a single drive, and it is 'logical' to assume that people had ways of discarding refuse and thanking the souls of the animals, as well as spirits and powers, for the catch. The repetition of figures associated with the enclosures indicate there were sets of rules to be followed and rituals to be conducted related to specific powers, some of which might have had human shape and others in the shape of specific reindeer, and bears. The bears are the most unexpected participant in the compositions, and why else would they be there if not to keep an eye on matters: as a power to oversee the proper conduct of hunt and that the reindeer were shown due respect.

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