

Clay figural art in the forest belt of Neolithic eastern Europe

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Small clay figural art in the forest belt of Neolithic eastern Europe was produced in several regions. Its major concentration lies in the eastern Baltic, in Karelia and the Onega Basin, and occasional finds are known from the Novgorod District, and elsewhere. This paper discusses the principal types of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines, and their patterns of distribution.

Eastern Baltic: Anthropomorphic Small Art

The issue of Neolithic clay figural art in the eastern Baltic surfaced in the late 1930's, when Šturms (1937: 83-91) found three anthropomorphic clay figurines during his excavations at the Purciems settlement site in Latvia (Fig. 1), near the coast of the Baltic Sea. Later finds of anthropomorphic, as well as zoomorphic, small art in Latvia have come from the Lubana Lake Depression, where, since the middle of the 1960's, archaeological investigations have been carried out by the author (Loze 1967: 22-27; 1970: 48-61; 1979: 109-110; 1983: 99-110; 1987: 40-42; 1988: 85-96). Objects of anthropomorphic small art were also found in Burial 221 at the Zvejnieki cemetery (Zagorskis 1987: 77-78) and at the Zvejnieki settlement site (Zagorskis 1965: 18; Loze 1970: 50-52). In Estonia, Jaanits (1954: 196; 1959a: 55; 1959b: 273-274; 1961: 23-27) has published an entire series of small clay figurines. Rimantienė (1979, Fig. 87: 7) documents one zoomorphic clay artefact from the Šventoji 26 settlement site in Lithuania.

On the basis of stylistic attributes, as well as the general manner of modelling, it is possible to classify anthropomorphic figurines by several types. In this study, one type is represented by an individual whose head is turned upwards and who has a flat foot instead of legs. A second type of figurine, in a sitting posture, is described elsewhere as having a "bean-shaped" torso (in the Russian literature) and as "embryo-shaped" (in the Finnish literature). A third type is the so-called eastern E 2 variant, namely, a sitting figurine with two feet. A fourth type shows an individual with a flat face, and a nose formed by a projection between eye sockets.

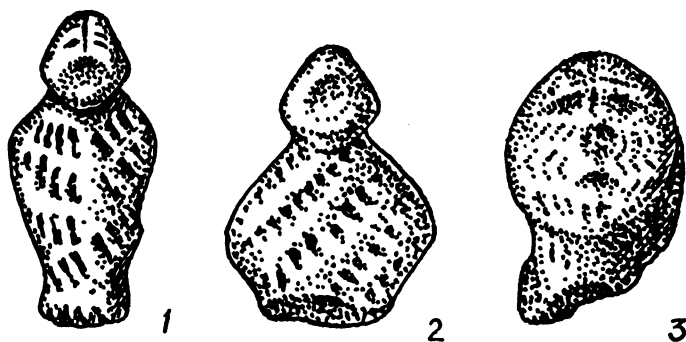


Fig. 1. Small clay figurines from the Purciems settlement, Latvia (after Šturms 1937).

1 pav. Mažos molio figūrēlēs iš Purciems gyvenvietēs, Latvija (Šturms 1937).

The first type is represented by figurines from the Purciems site, and those from the Nainiekste settlement site in the Lubāna Lake Depression (Fig. 2). The original three figurines found at Purciems have been the subject of much study (cf. Äyräpää 1942, Figs. 38, 39; Wyszomirska 1984, Pl. XII: 1-3). Therefore, I shall remark only that the Purciems figurines are much smaller than those at Jetbølle, Åland Islands, Finland (Cederhvarf 1912, Table IV: 1a, 1b; Äyräpää 1942, Fig. 40). Another difference: the heads of two of the Purciems figurines have the form of a rounded triangle (Fig. 1: 1, 2), while the third one (Fig. 1: 3) has an oval face with eyes represented by hollows.

It has been proposed that the Nainiekste figurine (Fig. 2) belongs to the Finnish group of anthropomorphic figurines (Loze 1970: 49-50). If one examines, however, the detailed facial design of the Nainiekste figurine — the use of modelling to form the nose projection, as well as the graphic depiction of eyes, eyebrows, mouth, face wrinkles, and beard or tattoos — it is clear that the head differs from those found in the Åland Islands (Nunez 1986, Fig. 5: A-D). Moreover, the Nainiekste figurine has a very carefully made hair style, or head-dress, ornamented with regularly distributed lens-shaped depressions. In addition, it has a well-shaped oval face, which makes it the most carefully made of all such figurines found at Purciems and the Åland Islands. The Åland figurines have disk-shaped faces, with hair and beard represented by comb impressions.

The fragmentary figurine (Fig. 3: 2) from the Zvejnieki settlement site has its eyes set in an oval face, a modelled



Fig. 2. Representation of a human head (fragment of a clay figurine), the Nainiekste settlement, Latvia.

2 pav. Žmogaus galvos atvaizdas (molio figūrēlēs fragmentas), Nainiekste gyvenvietē,

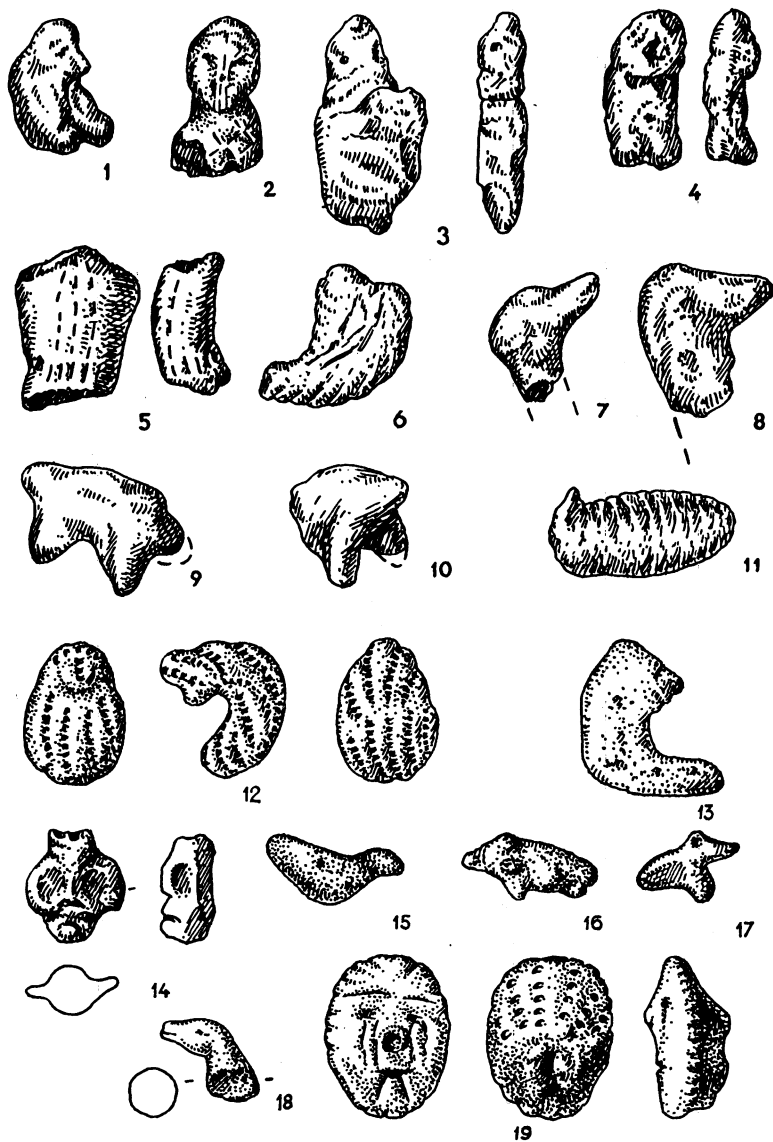


Fig. 3. Eastern Baltic Neolithic anthropomorphic (1-6, 12-14, 19) and zoomorphic (7-11, 15-18) small clay figurines: 1 - Valma settlement (after Jaanits 1959a); 2 - Zvejnieki settlement (after Zagorskis 1965); 3 - Tamula settlement (after Jaanits 1954); 4, 5 - Akali settlement (after Jaanits 1959b); 6, 11, 17 - Lagaža settlement; 7, 8, 10 - Lomme settlement (after Jaanits 1961); 9 - Nakamāe settlement (after Jaanits 1961); 12 - Zvejnieki cemetery (Burial 221)(after Zagorskis 1987); 13 - Zvidze settlement; 14 - Abora I settlement; 15, 16 - Zvejsalas settlement; 18 - Šventoji 26 settlement (after Rimantiēnē 1979).

3 pav. Rytų Pabaltijo neolitinės antropomorfinės (1-6, 12-14, 19) ir zoomorfinės (7-11, 15-18) molio figūrėlės: 1 - Valma gyvenvietė (pagal Jaanits 1959a); 2 - Zvejnieki gyvenvietė (pagal Zagorskis 1965); 3 - Tamula gyvenvietė (pagal Jaanits 1954); 4, 5 - Akali gyvenvietė (pagal Jaanits 1959b); 6, 11, 17 - Lagaža gyvenvietė; 7, 8, 10 - Lomme gyvenvietė (pagal Jaanits 1961); 9 - Nakamae gyvenvietė (pagal Jaanits 1961); 12 - Zvejnieki kapinynas (Kapas 221)(pagal Zagorskis 1987); 13 - Zvidze gyvenvietė; 14 - Abora I gyvenvietė; 15, 16 - Zvejsalas gyvenvietė; 18 - Šventoji 26 gyvenvietė (pagal Rimantiēnē 1979).



Fig. 4. Head (profile) of an anthropomorphic clay figurine, Suļka settlement, Latvia.

4 pav. Antropomorfinēs molio figūrēlēs galva (profilis), Sulka gyvenvietē, Latvija.

projecting nose, and a chin ornamented with longitudinal incisions, probably representing a beard. Another similar figurine fragment — a body with a marked flattened foot (Fig. 3: 5) — was found at the Middle Neolithic Akali settlement site, Estonia (Jaanits 1959b, Fig. 59: 2).

On balance, however, despite certain differences in detail, the anthropomorphic figurines of the Purciems, Nainiekste and Zvejnieki settlement sites appear to belong to the Åland Naturalistic Type, described in the Finnish archaeological literature (Wyszomirska 1984: 96; Nunez 1986, Fig. 5, 6). It is of interest that some analysts believe the Åland figurines are attempts to portray individual people.

Figurines of the second type, anthropomorphs with a bean or embryo-shaped torso, come from the Zvejnieki cemetery (Fig. 3: 12; Burial 221), the Lagaža settlement site in the Lubana Lake Depression (Fig. 3: 6), and Zvidze (Fig. 3: 13). Facial details of the Zvejnieki figurine are not refined. The nose is formed by a projection, and comb impressions cover the figurine, in longitudinal rows both on the torso and on the head. The Lagaža figurine is fragmentary — only the lower part of the body has survived. All of them belong to Type E 2 of the eastern variant of anthropomorphic modelled clay figurines called out in the Finnish literature on small plastic art (Nunez 1986, Fig. 4). They are described also as “spoon-shaped” or “sitting”, and it is proposed that they served as phallic amulets (Wyszomirska 1984: 96). The figurines (Fig. 3: 1) found in the Valma settlement site, Estonia, dating to the Middle Neolithic Comb-and-Pit-marked Pottery culture, belong to this type (Jaanits 1959a, Fig. II: 7).

An anthropomorphic figurine of the third type (Fig. 4), of which only the head has remained, was found in the Suļka settlement site in the Lubāna Lake Depression. It belongs to the Middle Neolithic Comb-and-Pit-Marked Pottery culture. In my opinion, it represents a separate type, because of such features as the strong nose projection, the superficially incised mouth line, and the eye hollows. Taken together, these features represent a special approach to the modelling of an anthropomorphic figurine.

The Suļka example is similar to a figurine whose distribution is largely associated with the Åland Islands (Nunez 1986, Fig. 5: F). Additionally, the strong nose projection characteristic of the Jetbølle sample is also found in figurines of the eastern E 2 variant, or the sitting figurine with two feet — such as the one from the Hietaniemi settlement (Fig. 5: 9; cf. Miettinen 1964: 34-44). It seems that figurines of this type should continue to be differentiated typologically. The example from the Niskasio settlement site (Fig. 5: 6; cf. Luho 1967, Fig. 7b) should also be included in this type.

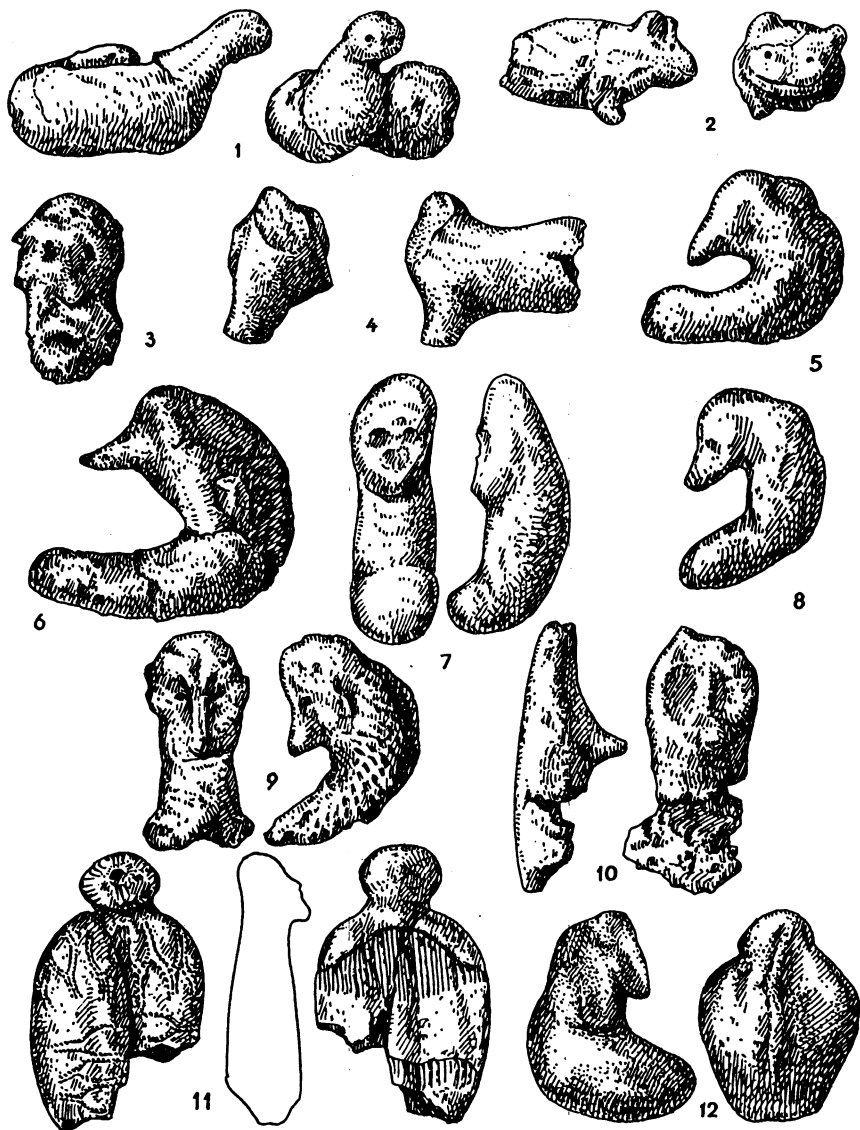


Fig. 5. Neolithic anthropomorphic (3, 5-12) and zoomorphic (1, 2, 4) small clay figurines from Finland. 1, 2 - Hietaniemi, Loupioinen parish, Tavastland (after Janzon 1983); 3 - Sätos, Kuusjärvi (after Luho 1967); 4 - Väntsi, Johannes parish, South Karelia (after Edgren 1964); 5, 8 - Räisälä, Papinkangas (after Edgren 1964); 6 - Niskasio, Kymi (after Luho 1967); 7 - Askola, Honkaniemi (after Edgren 1964); 9 - Hietaniemi, Loupioinen parish, Tavastland (after Miettinen 1964); 10 - Honkilahti, Kolmhaara (after Edgren 1964); 11 - Jetbølle (after Åyräpää 1942).

5 pav. Neolitinės antropomorfinės (3, 5-12) ir zoomorfinės molio figūrėlės iš Suomijos. 1, 2 - Hietaniemi, Loupioinen parapija, Tavastland (pagal Janzon 1983); 3 - Sätos, Kuusjärvi (pagal Luho 1967); 4 - Väntsi, Johannes parapija, Pietų Karelija (pagal Edgren 1964); 5, 8 - Räisälä, Papinkangas (pagal Edgren 1964); 6 - Niskasio, Kymi (pagal Luho 1967); 7 - Askola, Honkaniemi (pagal Edgren 1964); 9 - Hietaniemi, Loupioinen parapija, Tavastland (pagal Miettinen 1964); 10 - Honkilahti, Kolmhaara (pagal Edgren 1964); 11 - Jetbølle (pagal Åyräpää 1942).

The anthropomorphic figurine (a head fragment) of the fourth type has a flat face, with a nose projecting between eye sockets, and formed by finger imprints (Fig. 3: 14). The mouth line is incised. It was found at the Abora I settlement site, of Late Neolithic date. The anthropomorphic clay figurine from the Late Neolithic Tamula settlement site, Estonia, has a rather amorphous character (Fig. 3: 3; cf. Jaanits 1954, Fig. 22: 1). It has a clumsy and flabby body, the head is set on a stout neck and the eyes are marked by grooves. Finally, the figurine found at the Akali settlement site also has little expression of form (Fig. 3: 4; cf. Jaanits 1959b, Fig. 59: 1). The head is visible, but lacks detail.

Eastern Baltic: Zoomorphic Small Figural Art

The Neolithic collection of small zoomorphic art in Latvia is not large. It consists of one figurine of a duck and two figurines of a wild boar. The duck figurine from the Middle Neolithic Zvejsalas settlement site in the Lubāna Lake Depression is simplified to a great extent (Fig. 3: 15). Still, the typical features of a duck — the head, neck and oblong form — are evident. A clay representation of a wild boar, found at the same site, has an oblong triangular snout, a robust torso and projecting legs (Fig. 3: 16). The ears are also indicated. At the Late Neolithic - Early Bronze Age settlement site of Lagaža, a figurine represents either a sitting wild boar or a bear (Fig. 3: 17; and Fig. 6). Details of the body are not elaborated; only its contours are formed. The length does not exceed a few centimetres, and it is better visible in side-view.

In Estonia, at the Nakamäe and Lommi settlement sites, similar animal figurines have been found (Fig. 3: 9, 10). The forepart of one of them is missing (Fig. 3: 7, 8; cf. Jaanits 1961, Fig. 13: 1, 3). In Lithuania, the clay figurine of a waterfowl from the Šventoji 26 settlement site has a very general form (Fig. 3: 18).

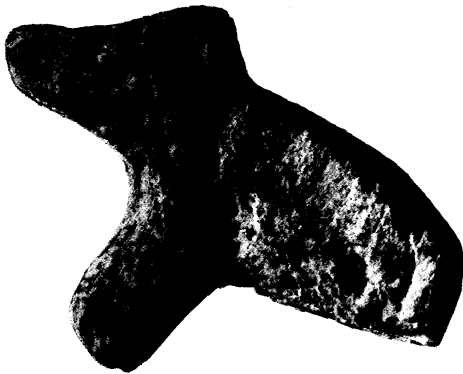


Fig. 6. Zoomorphic clay figurine (wild boar or bear?) from the Lagaža settlement, Latvia.

6 pav. Zoomorfinē molio figūrēlē (šernas ar lokys?) iš Lagažos gyvenvietės, Latvija.

Onega Basin: Small Figural Art

In the Onega Basin, anthropomorphic clay figurines of the Neolithic period are known from settlement sites at Kubenino (4 objects), Ileks (2), Modlon (1), and the mouth of the Kinema (1). Small clay art was first found at the Ileks settlement site, on the bank of Kushtozero Lake (Bryusov 1940, Fig. XXII; Foss 1952, Fig. 10: 6). More expressive examples of small art were later found in the burial field at Kubenino settlement site (Foss 1952, Fig. 10: 7-11; Oshibkina 1978, Fig. 40: 1-2, 4, 7-8), the Modlon settlement site (Foss 1952, Fig. 10: 12; Oshibkina 1978, Fig. 40: 3) and the Kinema mouth settlement site (Bryusov 1951, Fig. 13: 3; Oshibkina 1978, Fig. 40: 6).

Lower torso fragments of anthropomorphic figurines are known also from the Andozero 2 and Agashino settlement sites; the latter is located on the bank of Azatsk Lake (Oshibkina 1978, Fig. 41: 3, 4). They do not belong to typical Åland anthropomorphic figurines, but, according to Oshibkina, are closer in style to those found in the Berezovj Mys settlement site in the Urals (Raushenbakh 1965: 66-68).

The anthropomorphic figurines of the Onega Basin belong to different types. One of them (Fig. 7: 1), obtained from the burial inventory of the Kubenino settlement site, represents the Åland type. The head of this figurine fragment is turned upwards, and facial details are modelled and incised (Foss 1952, Fig. 10: 10). Two other figurines, from Kubenino (Fig. 7: 2) and Modlon (Fig. 7: 5), represent a peculiar type with a pronounced nose projection, small eyes and an ornament on the forehead and cheeks. Both figurines are fragments.

Two more figurines, both from Kubenino, represent the eastern E 2 type, according to the classification of Finnish archaeologists. These are figurines with a "bean-shaped torso" (according to Foss). In other words, they are in sitting postures or have embryo-shapes (Fig. 7: 12, 13). The figurine found at the Ileks site (Fig. 7: 11) should also be included among this type (Bryusov 1940, Fig. XXII). All three figurines have a pronounced nose projection and marked eyes.

Small zoomorphic plastic art from the Onega Neolithic is represented by three figurines of birds. The most expressive example is from Kubenino (Fig. 7: 7). The realism of this clay sculpture differs greatly from the other, more stylized depictions of birds, with long beaks and small eyes (Fig. 7: 6, 10). Of the two, one was found at the Kinema mouth settlement site, the other at Ileks (Oshibkina 1978, Fig. 40: 5, 6).

Karelia: Small Figural Art

The small plastic art of Neolithic Karelia has been discussed by Pankrushev (1964, Fig. 35; 1978, Fig. 12: 2) in conjunction with the Solommenoje VII settlement site, on the bank of Lake Logmozero. Several finds come from the Vigajnavolok I settlement site, on the bank of Lake Onega (Zhuravlev 1972, Fig. 1),

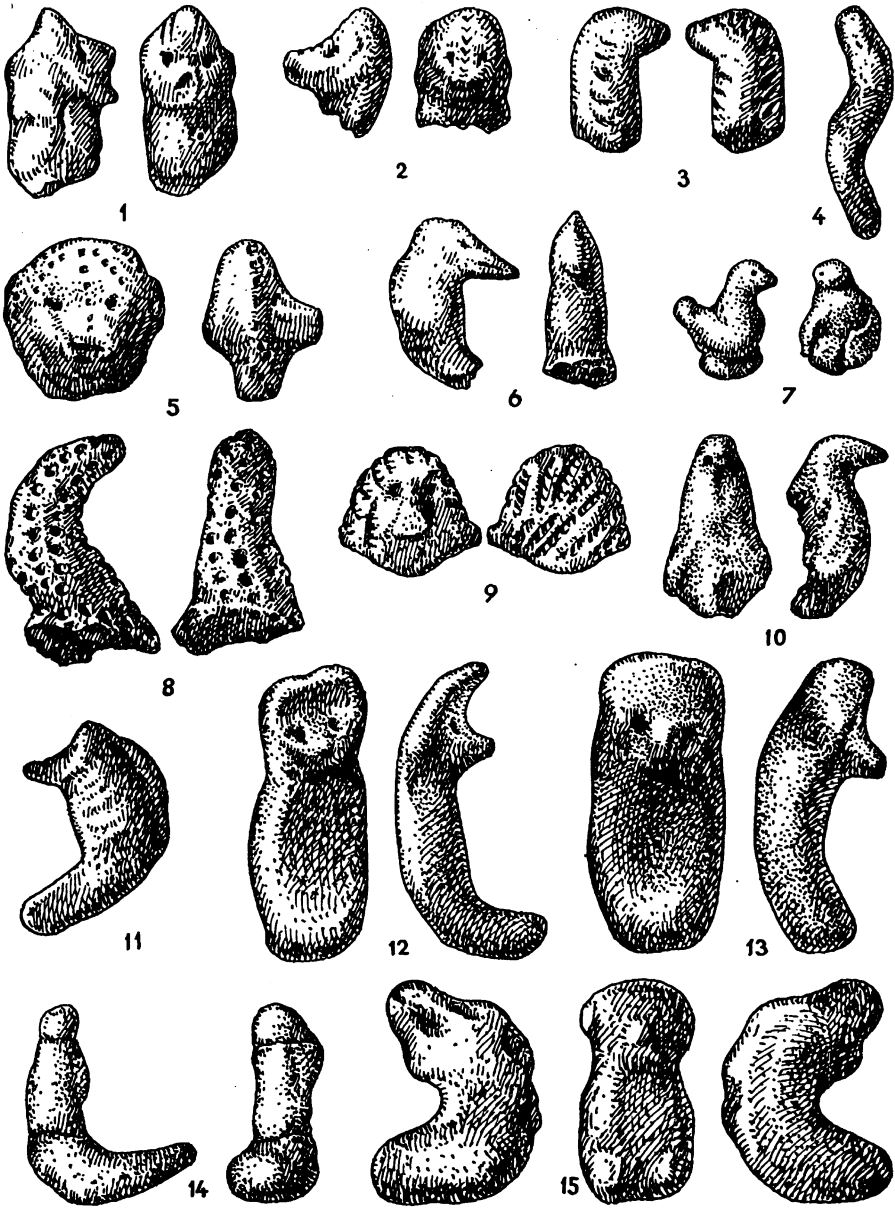


Fig. 7. Anthropomorphic (1, 2, 5, 9, 11-15) and zoomorphic (3, 4, 6-8, 10) small clay figurines from the Onega Basin and Karelia. 1, 2, 7, 12, 13 - Kubenino settlement; 5 - Modlon settlement; 6 - mouth of the Kinema (after Oshibkina 1978); 8, 9, 14 - Vigajnavolok I settlement (after Zhuravljov 1972); 11 - the lleks settlement (after Brjusov 1940); 15 - Solomennoje VII settlement (after Pankrushev 1978).

7 pav. Antropomorfinės (1, 2, 5, 9, 11-15) ir zoomorfinės (3, 4, 6-8, 10) molio figūrėlės iš Onegos baseino ir Karelijos. 1, 2, 7, 12, 13 - Kubenino gyvenvietė; 5 - Modlon gyvenvietė; 6 - Kinemos upės žiotys (pagal Ošibkiną 1978); 8, 9, 14 - Vigajnavolok I gyvenvietė (pagal Žuravlova 1972); 11 - lleks gyvenvietė (pagal Briusovą 1940); 15 - Solomennoje VII gyvenvietė (pagal Pankruševą 1978).

and a small clay artefact is known from the Lakhta III settlement site, on the bank of Lake Sjamozero (Titov 1968: 5-6).

Figurines from the Neolithic settlements of Karelia are of two types. One is represented by the eastern E type (Fig. 7: 14, 15), and the other by the head of a peculiar anthropomorphic moulding (Fig. 7: 9), which, according to Zhuravlev (1972, Fig. 1: 1), is rather unusual for northern regions. The first two figurines, one from the Vigajnavolok I and the other from the Solomennoje VII settlement sites, as well as that from the Lakhta III settlement site, depict a human being in a rather schematic fashion. Both figurines can be classified as anthropomorphic "bean-shaped" or "sitting" types.

The figurine of the second type has a head of realistic shape (Fig. 7: 9). The rather broad nose is modelled, and the eyes are indicated by means of grooves or pits. The head is rounded off with a gradually narrowing forehead. Oblique comb impressions suggest a hair-style or head-dress.

An interesting example of the zoomorphic small art of Karelia is the head of a bird, perhaps a goose or a swan, with a curving neck (Fig. 7: 8). Oddly, it is ornamented with rows of tiny pits, running from the head to the body. The head fragment of another bird, with a short beak and a long neck (Fig. 7: 3), is covered with short comb impressions.

The figurine of a snake from the Vigajnavolok I settlement site is identifiable through the undulating lines of its body. The eyes and mouth, however, are not indicated (Fig. 7: 4). Similar figurines, according to Zhuravlev (1972, Fig. 1: 5), have been found at the Shoiruksh Rapids II and Besovy Sladki III settlement sites.

Finland: Small Figural Art

Due to a great number of finds, a comprehensive discussion of Neolithic clay art exists in the Finnish archaeological literature. As of 1984, 112 such artefacts are known from Finland (see Wyszomirska 1984, Fig. 5). A summary report by Äyräpää (1942: 82-123) on the small clay art of the Comb Pottery Culture encompasses Finland and the neighbouring regions of north-eastern Europe. Another summary article by Nunez (1986: 17-34) deals with the Neolithic small plastic art of the Åland Islands and Finland. (Earlier in this paper, I discussed the outstanding figurines from Jetbølle in the Åland Islands). These analyses, as well as related work (Edgren 1964: 82-90; Miettinen 1964: 34-44; Luho 1967: 25-38), provide a firm basis for the establishment of a typology of Neolithic small clay art.

The work of Swedish specialists in this area also deserves attention. Of importance is Wyszomirska's summary (1984) of the Neolithic plastic art among northern European hunters and gatherers, including those of Finland; as well as the work of Janzon (1983: 1-20) on the zoomorphic figurines in Neolithic Gotland, which mentions the plastic art of Finland.

The Neolithic small clay art of Finland, probably derived from a plastic art tradition whose source lies to the east, represents an important peri-Baltic

clay art *d'mobile*. This is particularly true of the naturalistic figurines from the Jetbølle settlement (Fig. 5: 11). As discussed, figurines of this type were also found in the Latvian Neolithic settlements of Purciems and Nainiekste, which suggests regional continuity of artistic/ritual culture within the northern and eastern littoral of the Baltic Sea.

Echoes of the eastern Baltic tradition of small clay art can also be found further east, e.g. the Kubenino burial field (Fig. 7: 1) in the eastern part of the Onega Basin. Sitting anthropomorphic figurines, are present in the eastern Baltic (Fig. 3: 6, 12, 13), Karelia (Fig. 7: 14, 15), Finland (Fig. 5: 5-9, 12), and the eastern Onega Basin (Fig. 7: 12-13). I would like to note, however, that among the Finnish examples, it is questionable whether the figurine from Sätos, Lake Kuusjärvi, should be included as a member of the “embryo-shaped” type (Fig. 5: 3). The facial details suggest that it belongs to a different type. A separate type may also be represented by the figurine from Honkilahti, Kolmhaara (Fig. 5: 10), earlier published by Edgren (1964).

Sitting anthropomorphic figurines are found as far as western Siberia, at the Lar'jak III settlement site in the middle course of the Ob (Moshinskaja 1976, Fig. 1: a, b; Studzitskaja 1987, Fig. 7: 1). On the whole, their pattern of distribution is intriguing, and represents a fertile area for further research.

Interesting examples of zoomorphic small plastic art are known from Finland: for instance, figurines of a snake (?) and a wild boar (?) from Hietaniemi, Loupioinen parish, Tavastland (Fig. 5: 1, 2). The identification of some of these figurines is open to debate. Janzon, commenting upon Edgren's (1964) published figurines, describes the figurine fragment of a big animal from Väntsi, Johannes parish, South Karelia as a representation of a horse (Fig. 5: 4).

Conclusions

The forest belt of Neolithic north-eastern Europe had several regional traditions in anthropomorphic small clay art. Depictions of human beings in the clay art of the Åland Islands (Figs. 1, 2, 5: 11), for example, are relatively naturalistic. The style is also present in the Baltic eastern littoral, namely the Purciems and Nainiekste settlements in Latvia. These examples of small anthropomorphic art — with the head turned upwards, and the representation of a flat foot instead of legs — are diagnostic of the Middle Neolithic. They may represent a deep-rooted tradition in Neolithic figural art, that of modelling the head so it turns upwards. Note, for example, the much older figurine (by at least a millennium) of a sitting woman from Pazardjik, Bulgaria (Gimbutas 1974: 207-209).

Figurines associated with the Middle Neolithic Comb Pottery cultures of eastern Europe (and perhaps also of western Siberia) are those of “sitting” human beings, known also as figurines with “bean-shaped” torsos or “embryo-shaped”. The anthropomorphic head fragments, however, from Sulka, Latvia and Sätos, Finland, previously included in the category of “sitting” individuals, should probably be re-classified.

In closing, I would like to draw attention once more to the remarkable originality of the miniature representations of human beings, found at the Neolithic settlements of Abora I, Latvia (Fig. 3: 14), Vigajnavolok I, Karelia (Fig. 7: 9) and Honkilahti, Finland (Fig. 5: 10). They indicate, clearly, that there remains much unknown territory in the realm of Neolithic small figural art.

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Miško juostos molinių figūrėlių menas neolitinėje rytų Europoje

ILZE LOZE

Santrauka

Ši studija tiria Rytų Europos miško juostos (įskaitant rytų Pabaltijį, Onegos ežero baseiną, Kareliją, Suomiją) iš molio modeliuotą meną. Pagal stilistinius bruožus ir bendrą modeliavimo manierą buvo sudaryta Rytų Pabaltijo mažų molinių figūrėlių klasifikacija. Išskiriamieji 4 pagrindinius antropomorfinių figūrėlių tipus (pav. 1-4). Išraiškiausiai pavyzdžiai priklauso Ålando salos natūralistiniam tipui (pav. 1, 2). Antras tipas — taip vadinamos pupelės arba gemalo pavidalo figūrėlės (pav. 3: 2, 6, 13). Trečią tipą atspindi mažai žinomos figūrėlės, turinčios ryškų nosies modeliavimą (pav. 4), taip pat plokščio veido modeliavimą (pav. 3: 14).

Pirmo tipo figūrėlės datuojamos viduriniu neolitu ir atspindi seną tradiciją Europos neolito figūrėlių mene. Antras tipas, irgi priklausantis viduriniajam neolitui, yra būdingas rytų Europos ir vakarų Sibiro šukinės keramikos kultūrai. 3 ir 4 tipo figūrėlės yra ne taip gausiai paplitusios. Figūrėlės, kuriose išsikiša nosis bei turi plokščio veido modeliavimą laikomos originaliais variantais.