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THE DOGU PHENOMENON WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF EURASIAN AND AMERICAN CULTURES (STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM)

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The *Dogu* is a category of finds from the Japanese Jomon period that seems to be the most popular among both scientists and fanciers of antiquities⁽¹⁾. During several millennia they were widely spread across the Japanese Islands. The word "*dogu*" means "clay figurine". The *dogu* presently known are mainly anthropomorphic; only a few of them portray animals. Anthropomorphic figurines mainly represent female images; though figurines of men are also known. The figurines vary in shape and sizes.

In order to understand the *dogu* phenomenon, it seems to be important to characterize in more detail the Jomon period itself. In terms of divisions into periods, that is valid for Eurasia, the initial stage of the Jomon period coincides with the continental Neolithic, while its final stage is correlated with the end of the Scythian Epoch.

It has been traditionally considered, that the manufacturing of clay figurines originally appeared in the central part of the Honshu Island, and then gradually spread to the island of Hokkaido in the north-east and to the Kyushu Island in the south-west (Fig. 1). Such researchers as Prof. Esaka Teruya, Prof. Ono Mieko, Prof. Yoneda Konosuke and others⁽²⁾ adhere to this point of view. Proceeding from this, we use the periods that have been established for the Central Honshu. According to this, the Jomon period can be subdivided into five stages:

- Early Jomon - 7500 - 5300 BC
- Initial Jomon - 5300 - 3600 BC
- Middle Jomon - 3600 - 2500 BC

Late Jomon - 2500 - 1000 BC

Final Jomon - 1000 - 300 BC ⁽³⁾

Somewhat different chronological schemes reflecting local peculiarities have been established for other regions ⁽⁴⁾.

As for the Jomon society, it should be noted that the primitive economy of that time was based on hunting, gathering and fishing in the coastal regions. As early as in the Initial Jomon, the early forms of agriculture appeared, though the agriculture was of minor importance until the time when the Yayoi Culture of the Bronze Age spread across the islands ⁽⁵⁾.

The Jomon Epoch was characterized by several types of sites. These are shell middens, settlements of probably seasonal character, burial complexes and ritual structures of various kinds including stone rings and vertically positioned stones ⁽⁶⁾. The Jomon ceramics are of special interest. The whole epoch was named after the Jomon specific ornament ("Jomon" means "cord ornament") ⁽⁷⁾. The Jomon epoch is also rich in anthropomorphic images. Besides *dogu*, figurines of stone and bone, masks made of clay and shells, and ceramic ornamented plates are available ⁽⁸⁾.

As mentioned above, the *dogu* vary in shapes and sizes. Some of the figurines are very small (up to 3 cm), while others are large (about 45 cm). Hollow, three-dimensional and flat figurines are encountered ⁽⁹⁾. Actually all figurines were found broken ⁽¹⁰⁾. Some of the *dogu* were found within special structures of small stones or ceramic fragments ⁽¹¹⁾, sometimes even inside of intact ceramic vessels or other figurines ⁽¹²⁾. In the structures, traces of fire or red paint are often encountered ⁽¹³⁾.

During the period of their existence, the Japanese clay figurines underwent certain morphological modifications (Fig. 2) ⁽¹⁴⁾. The earliest *dogu* were of simple shape and small size ⁽¹⁵⁾. During the Initial Jomon period, ornamented figurines with distinctively depicted extremities appeared ⁽¹⁶⁾. The Middle Jomon figurines represent in a rather realistic manner the shape of human body and face made in details ⁽¹⁷⁾. During the Late and Final periods, the ornament became more complicated; the images became more stylized and symbolic ⁽¹⁸⁾. Then, with the appearance of the Yayoi Culture, this tradition of figurine-making practically came to an end by taking the forms of absolutely different kinds ⁽¹⁹⁾.

The *dogu* phenomenon has been well elucidated in scientific literature. Several attempts to systemize the *dogu* proceeding from different features have been made. Works by Prof. Esaka, Prof. Yoneda, Prof. Ono, Prof. Nagamine and some others are among them ⁽²⁰⁾. However, at present, no universal typology taking into consideration

the maximum number of features has been created. Researchers show their unanimity in the interpretation of the *dogu*. Traditionally, the clay figurines were associated with the cult of a womanlike deity⁽²¹⁾; they probably served as toys or amulets⁽²²⁾.

As early as at the beginning of the 20th century, Prof. Torii Ryuzo wrote about the connection existing between the *dogu* and the cult of the womanlike deity⁽²³⁾. He believed that women played a special role in the Jomon society; only women were engaged in making ceramic vessels and *dogu*. In this connection, the cult of the womanlike deity well could have existed.

Finding of the *dogu* in association with stone sticks *sekibo*, considered to be phallic symbols, allows the researcher to conjecture that the *dogu* were connected with the cult of fertility that, according to Prof. Yawata Itiro, should not necessarily be understood in a strict agricultural sense⁽²⁴⁾.

Prof. Yoshida Atsuhiko produced mythological proofs indicating that the *dogu* were associated with the cult of fertility. He took into account the fact that the majority of the *dogu* were found intentionally broken⁽²⁵⁾. In the Japanese mythology, there is a motif concerning a female deity Ohochetsuhime who was cut into pieces. Then edible plants originated from those pieces⁽²⁶⁾. On the base of this myth, there might exist a rite symbolizing the creation of edible plants. Female figurines might play the leading part in this rite⁽²⁷⁾. Utilization of the statuettes could be even more concrete, connected with particular people⁽²⁸⁾. Occurrence of the *dogu* in the burial complexes may testify to their association with death⁽²⁹⁾. Presently the discussion about typology, usage and function of the *dogu* is still in progress⁽³⁰⁾.

Anthropomorphic plastics are present in some Neolithic and Bronze Age archaeological cultures of Eurasia. Clay figurines of women are known throughout the vast territory stretching from the Far Eastern Primorye and Priamurie to Central Asia, the Near East, South-West Europe and even in the American continent (Fig. 3).

Researchers such as V.I. Masson and V.S. Sarianidi⁽³¹⁾ in Russia and Kato Kyuzo⁽³²⁾ in Japan wrote about common semantic motives and problems associated with causes of appearance of this phenomenon. These researchers are unanimous in connecting this phenomenon with the cult of fertility. They motivated such a premise by a myriad of reasons. The main reasons are: the agricultural character of the Neolithic cultures; iconographic details of the images; presence of cereal grains in ceramic paste, etc.⁽³³⁾.

In our opinion, however, the nature of this phenomenon, recorded in various cultures of Eurasia and America, are interpreted in different ways.

Thus, the figurines that are spatially and chronologically closest to the Jomon statuettes, were recorded in the Voznesenovskaya and Lidovskaya cultures of Neolithic and Bronze ages (the end of the 3rd/beginning of the 2nd millennium BC and the beginning of the 1st millennium BC, respectively) in the Russian Far East⁽³⁴⁾ and at the Sopkhokhan site (the Early Iron Age) of North Korea⁽³⁵⁾ (Fig. 4). It should be stressed that all these pieces are iconographically similar; this fact has been already mentioned by researchers⁽³⁶⁾.

As the recent investigations by Russian scholars, particularly Academician A.P.Derevianko and Prof. V.E. Medvedev, have demonstrated, the phenomenon of the emergence of ceramic pottery in the Primorye at the end of Pleistocene makes it possible to examine it in correlation with the synchronous early ceramic cultures of Japan⁽³⁷⁾. Similarities in shape and ornaments of pottery, ceramic stamps (pentaders) as well as in ceramic anthropomorphic figurines⁽³⁸⁾ shared by more recent cultures of the Japanese Islands and the maritime regions of the mainland allows researchers to consider the cause of origin and evolution of the latter phenomenon to be analogous for the above mentioned cultures.

Emergence of female anthropomorphic figurines in cattle-breeding cultures of South Siberia - first in the Okunevsakya⁽³⁹⁾ and then in the Karasukskaya⁽⁴⁰⁾ cultures (Fig. 5) - can probably be explained by the existence of cults connected with giving birth to the next generation, in both humans and animals. However these figurines differ iconographically from those found in Japan, Central and Frontal Asia and Europe.

Figurines found among materials of the Tripolje-Kokuteni Culture of East Europe strikingly resemble the dogu⁽⁴¹⁾. Interestingly, these regions which are remote from each other also share similarities in ornamental motives and stamps-pentaders⁽⁴²⁾.

A similarity is also observed in the semantic interpretations of the given phenomenon suggested for the Jomon the *dogu* and the Tripolje-Kokuteni figurines (Fig. 6, 7, 8). Thus A.P. Pogožheva examining the Tripolje statuettes, mentioned about the existence of a female deity who combined a variety of meanings. She was a mistress of life and death, and at the same time - the original mother who may be considered as the mother-earth⁽⁴³⁾. One of her functions was to accompany the deceased⁽⁴⁴⁾.

V.I. Masson, V.S.Sarianidi and E.V. Antonova, while analyzing ceramic figurines from the Frontal and Central Asia (Fig. 6,7,8), wrote about the presence of the female deity analogous for the Asian Neolithic cultures and connected with the reverence of the mother-earth⁽⁴⁵⁾.

Such a striking similarity of cultures, that were thousands of kilometers apart and anthropologically and ethnically different, should be explained by a convergence. In the present case, the phenomenon of convergence is accounted for by the presence of agricultural economy as a dominant giving birth to similar ideological and mythological ideas and, consequently to similar semantic realities.

Comparison of the Jomon statuettes with the materials of the Central American Valdivia Culture is of a special interest. This culture appeared on the Pacific coast in the 3rd millennium BC⁽⁴⁶⁾. There is a theory concerning the connection of this culture with the Japanese Islands and possible migration of the populations from the Kyushu Island during the Jomon epoch⁽⁴⁷⁾. According to Prof. Emilio Estrada, the occurrence of ceramics sharing many similarities with the Jomon pottery can be used for the corroboration of this theory⁽⁴⁸⁾. In addition, the Valdivia Culture is characterized by the presence of stone and ceramic anthropomorphic figurines (Fig. 9)⁽⁴⁹⁾. Another proof of the probable migration of the Neolithic inhabitants of the Japanese Islands is the direction of the Pacific Ocean currents: due to them, the islanders could reach the American continent.

Thus it should be stated that the "*dogu* phenomenon", considered here only in the context of cultures demonstrating it in the most striking way, requires a special investigation and a special kind of comprehension. This phenomenon is undoubtedly common to all mankind. Its earliest manifestations can be found in the Paleolithic cultures of Eurasia, in the so called "Venuses"⁽⁵⁰⁾. A new wave of this phenomenon was strikingly demonstrated by Neolithic and Bronze age cultures not only in Eurasia, but also in America. The authors are sure that in order to unriddle many of the motives of the given phenomenon, a global approach, as well as an extensive analysis of folklore and ethnographic sources is required.

NOTES

1. See e.g.: Yoneda K, *Dogu*. Tokyo, 1984, (in Japanese); Vorobiyev M.V. *Drevniya Yaponia* (Ancient Japan), Moscow, 1958 (in Russian).
2. Yoneda K. *Dogu*, Tokyo, 1984(in Japanese); Nagamine M. Clay Figurines and Jomon Society // *Windows on Japanese Past; Studies in Archaeology and Prehistory*, Michigan, 1986.
3. Nagamine M., Clay Figurines and Jomon Society // *Windows on Japanese Past: Studies in Archaeology and Prehistory*, Michigan, 1986.

4. See e.g.: Esaka T., Ono M., *Knowledge about Dogu*, Tokion, 1983; *Jomon*, Tokyo, 1993 (in Japanese).
5. See e.g.: Watanabe H., Community Habitation and Food Gathering in Prehistoric Japan: An Ethnographic Interpretation of the Archaeological Evidence // *Windows on Japanese Past: Studies in Archaeology and Prehistory*, Michigan, 1986.
6. Ibid. pp. 229-251.
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8. See e.g. Esaka T., Ono M., *Knowledge about Dogu*, Tokion, 1983 (in Japanese).
9. See e.g. Nagamine M., Clay Figurines and Jomon Society // *Windows on Japanese Past: Studies in Archaeology and Prehistory*, Michigan, 1986, pp.255-267.
10. See e.g. Esaka T., Ono M., *Knowledge about Dogu*, Tokion, 1983 (in Japanese), pp. 110-113.
11. See e.g. Yoneda K., *Dogu*, Tokyo, 1984 (in Japanese), pp.45-63.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., p. 67.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. See e.g. Faces of the Past. Fukuoka, 1982 (in Japanese).
20. See e.g. Esaka T., Ono M., *Knowledge about Dogu*, Tokion, 1983 (in Japanese); Yoneda K., *Dogu*, Tokyo, 1984 (in Japanese).
21. See e.g. Yoneda K., *Dogu*, Tokyo, 1984 (in Japanese), pp. 90-93.
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23. Ibid., p. 24.
24. Ibid., p. 31.
25. Ibid., p. 38.
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27. Yoneda K., *Dogu*, Tokyo, 1984 (in Japanese).
28. Esaka T., Ono M., *Knowledge about Dogu*, Tokion, 1983 (in Japanese), p.133.
29. Ibid., p.110.

30. Nagamine M., Clay Figurines and Jomon Society // *Windows on Japanese Past: Studies in Archaeology and Prehistory*, Michigan, 1986, pp.255-267.
31. See e.g. Masson V.M., Sarianidi V.I., *Sredneaziatskaya terrakota epokhi bronzy* (The Central Asian Terracotta of the Bronze Age), Moscow, 1973 (in Russian), pp. 83-122.
32. Kato Kyuzo, *History and Culture of Northern and Central Asia*, Kyoto, 1987 (in Japanese), pp. 28-32.
33. Masson V.M., Sarianidi V.I., *Sredneaziatskaya terrakota epokhi bronzy* (The Central Asian Terracotta of the Bronze Age), Moscow, 1973 (in Russian), pp. 83-187, 122-123; Kato Kyuzo, *History and Culture of Northern and Central Asia*, Kyoto, 1987 (in Japanese), pp. 28-32.
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44. *Ibid.*, pp.135-137.
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47. *Ibid.*, pp. 157-178.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-178.
49. Ford J.A., *A Comparison of Formative Cultures in the Americas. Diffusion or the Psychic Unity of Man*, Washington, 1969, pp.78-82.
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Figure 1. Distribution of *dogu* during the Jomon period. Japan.



Figure 2. Types of *dogu* (after Yoneda K., *Dogu*. Tokyo, 1984).

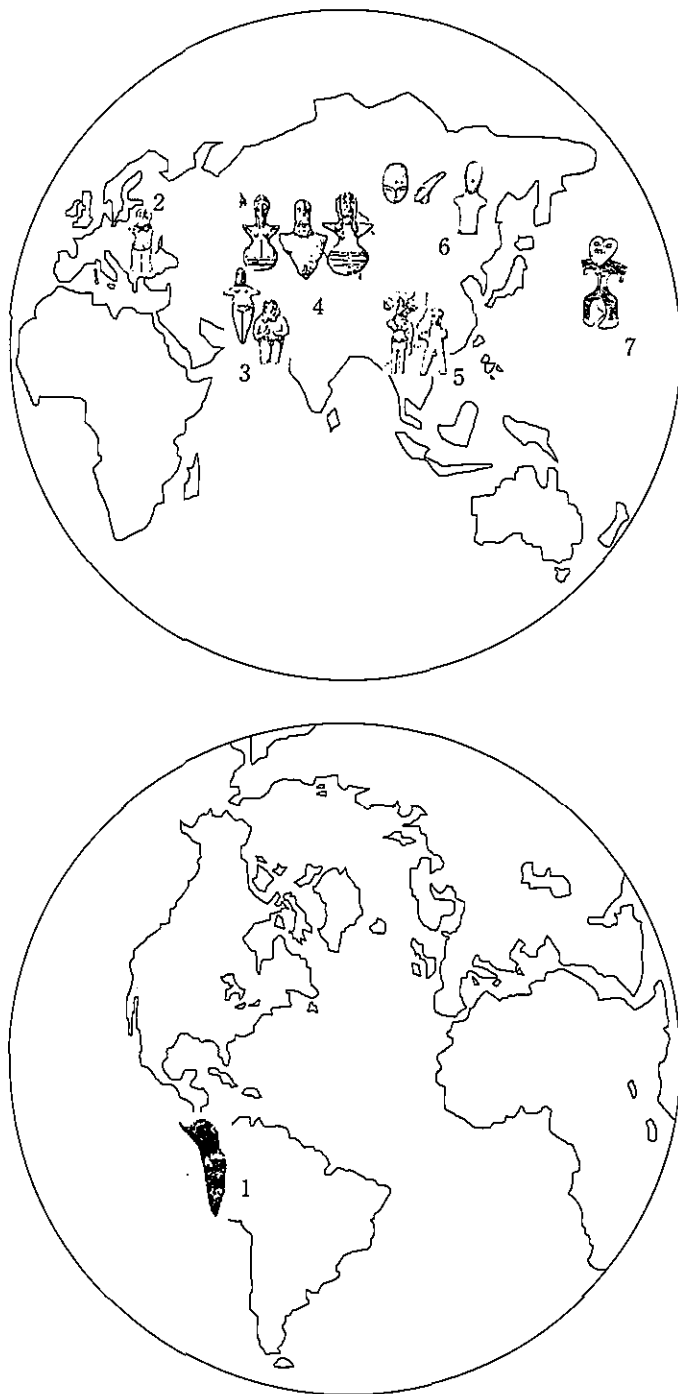


Figure 3. Map-scheme showing the distribution of female anthropomorphic figurines of the Neolithic and Bronze ages in Eurasia and America:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. The Valdivia Culture | 5. India |
| 2. The Tripolje-Kokuteni Culture | 6. Cultures of the Primorye and Korea |
| 3. The Frontal Asia | 7. The Jomon Culture. |
| 4. The Anau Culture | |

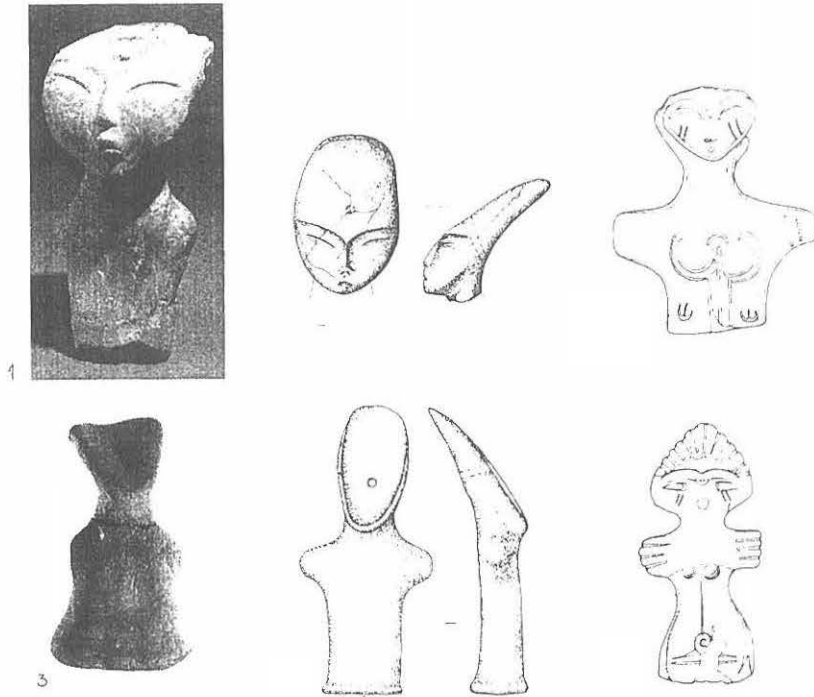


Figure 4. Anthropomorphic figurines of the Amur Region, Primorye, Korea and Japan of the Neolithic and Bronze ages:

1, 2. The Voznesenovskaya Culture

3. Northern Korea

4. The Lidovskaya Culture

5, 6. The Jomon Culture

(1 - after A.P. Okladnikov; 2 -after V.E. Medvedev; 4 -after V.I. Diakov; 5, 6 -after Yoneda K.)

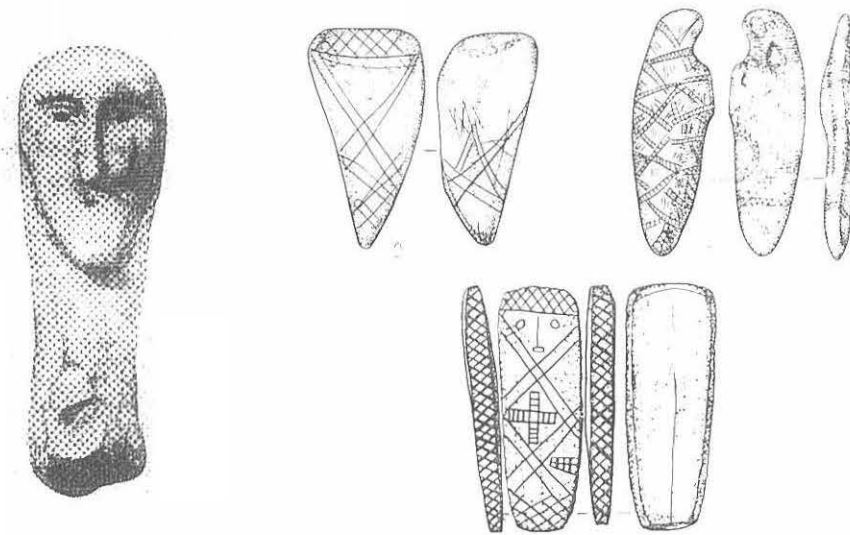


Figure 5. Stone anthropomorphic figurines of South Siberia, the Bronze Age.

1. The Okunevskaya Culture

2,3,4. The Karasukskaya Culture

(1 - after E.B. Vadetskaya; 2,3,4 - after D.G. Savinov).

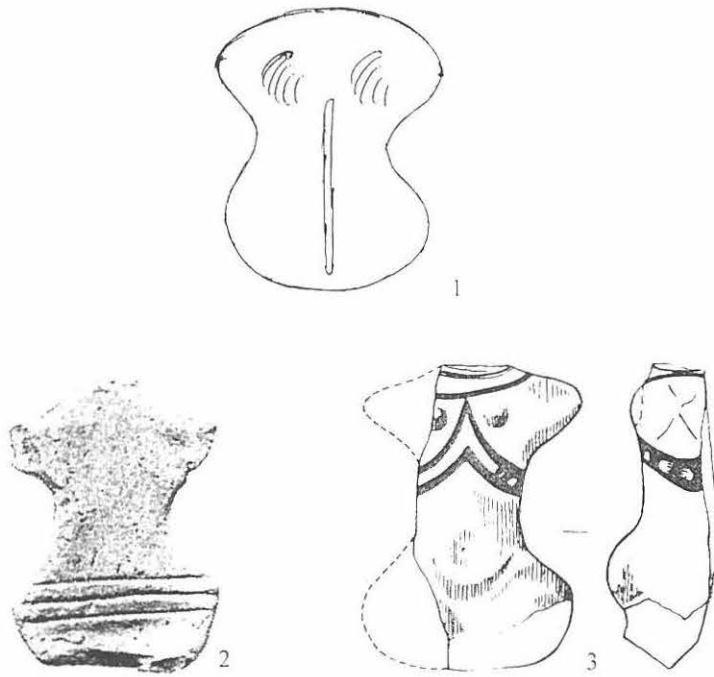


Figure 6. *Dogu* of the "reel" type in comparison with the continental figurines:

1. *Dogu*

2. Figurine from Southern Turkmenistan (the Anau Culture)

3. Figurine of the Tripolskaya Culture

(1 - after Esaka T. and Ono M.; 2 - after V.M. Masson and V.I. Sarianidi; 3 - after A.P. Pogozeva).

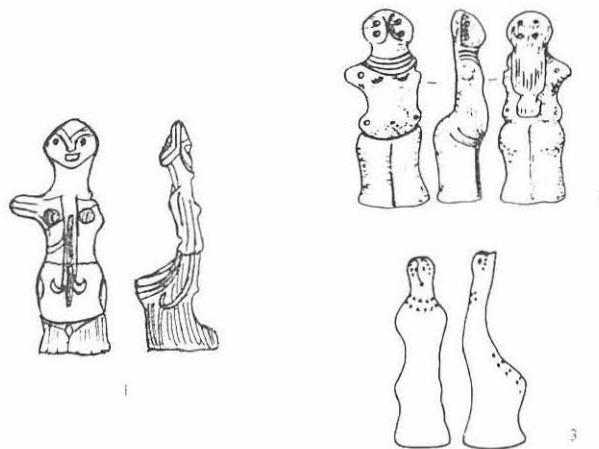


Figure 7. *Dogu* of the "hands to the sides" type in comparison with the continental figurines:

1. *Dogu*

2. Figurine of the Tripolskaya Culture

3. Figurine from Southern Turkmenistan (the Anau Culture)

(1 - after Esaka T. And Ono M.; 2 - after A.P. Pogozeva; 3 - after V.M. Masson and V.I. Sarianidi).

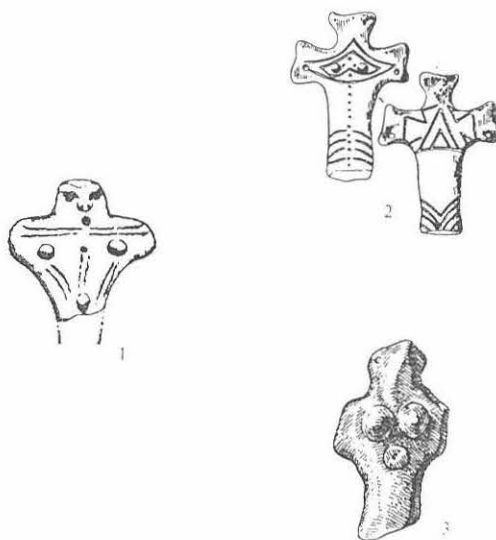


Figure 8. *Dogu* of the "cross" type in comparison with the continental figurines:

1. *Dogu*
 2. Figurine of the Tripolskaya Culture
 3. Figurine from Southern Turkmenistan (the Anau Culture)
- (1 - after Yoneda K.; 2 - after A.P. Pogožheva; 3 - after V.M. Masson and V.I. Sarianidi).

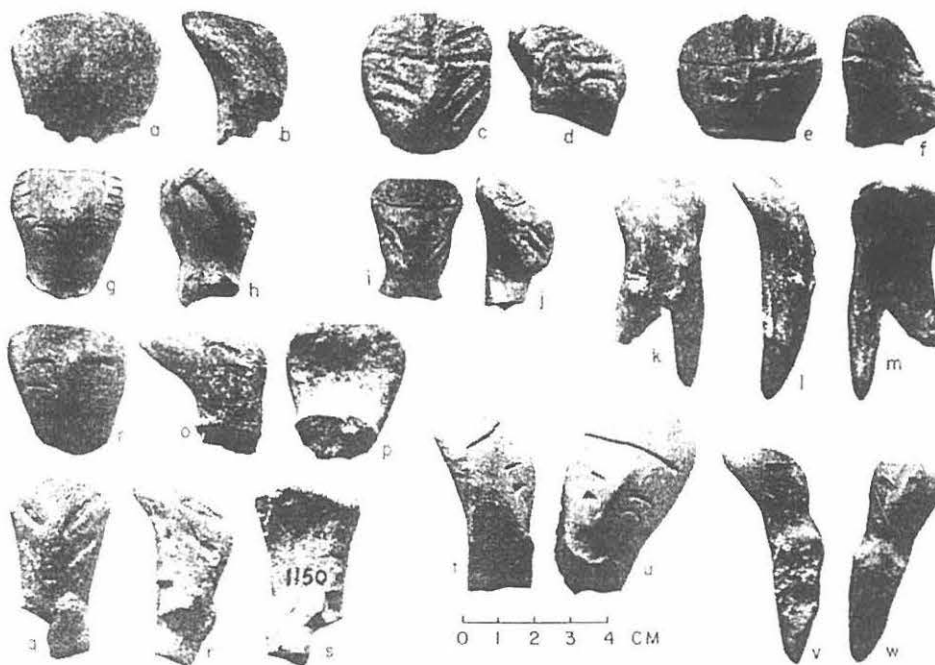


Figure 9. Figurines of the Valdivia Culture.