

S.F. Koksharov

*Institute of History and Archaeology, Ural Branch, Russian Academy of Sciences,
Sofii Kovalevskoi 16, Yekaterinburg, 620990, Russia
E-mail: serg.koksharov@mail.ru; uniz@mail.ru*

BRONZE AGE ANIMAL FIGURINES FROM THE TAIGA ZONE OF THE OB REGION

Figurines representing reindeer and bear heads were found at several Bronze Age sites of the Ob taiga. Images focus on the eyes, possibly relating to the right–left dichotomy. The same opposition is seen in certain Bronze and Early Iron Age anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations rendered in clay, metal, and graphic. These findings may testify to a distinct artistic tradition practiced in the region.

Keywords: *Graphics, representative art, metal figurines, “right–left” dichotomy, sculpture.*

Introduction

Many aspects of Western Siberian prehistoric culture indicate a close relationship with nature. This manifests itself in representative art depicting animals and man's place in nature. As the abundant scholarship demonstrates, drawings, figurines, and decorative patterns are highly informative in this respect. This article addresses sculptural representations of animals recovered from the settlement sites of Nizyamy VIII and Syroi Agan-1 in the taiga zone of the Ob region. The character of pottery and other artifacts allows the attribution of these sites to various phases of the post-Seima period of the Bronze Age.

Description of the artifacts

A full-length reindeer figurine was discovered at the settlement site of Nizyamy VIII. The site is located on the right bank of the Lower Ob in the Oktyabrsky Region of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District (Yugra) of the Tyumen Province (Morozov, 1985,

1986). V.M. Morozov excavated the site in 1987–1988. Ceramics from this site identified as the Lozva type (Koksharov, 1991: 98, fig. 2, 50; 1993: 12–13; 2006: 53–54, fig. 4, 38; Borzunov, 1992: 88) represent an unusual assemblage including pots with a gently curved profile and monotonous comb impressions, comparable with the pottery of the Varpaul type of the Seima (Andronovo) period (Koksharov, 2011: 88; 2013: 140–143). The site has also yielded vessels decorated with wavy or serpent-like impressions typical of Sotnikovo, Lozva, and Barsov pottery (Viktorova, 1970: 256–258, Pl. 1, 5, 6, 8–10; Sladkova, 2007: Fig. 1, 25–29, 31–33; Glushkov, Zakhzhaya, 2000: Fig. 58–59; Chemyakin, 2008: Fig. 35–37). The collection also includes an animal figurine that was documented in another publication, although without detailed description (Ugorskoye naslediyе..., 1994: 74, 128, Cat. No. 20; Morozov, 1995: Fig. on page 130; Koksharov, 2006: photograph).

This figurine, measuring 99 mm by 38 mm by 24 mm, was made of unevenly baked clay containing small mica particles (Fig. 1, 2). The figurine is poorly preserved: the forelegs and the left hind leg, the left ear, and the unusually thick tail were lost in ancient times. The



Fig. 1. Reindeer figurine from Nizyamy VIII.

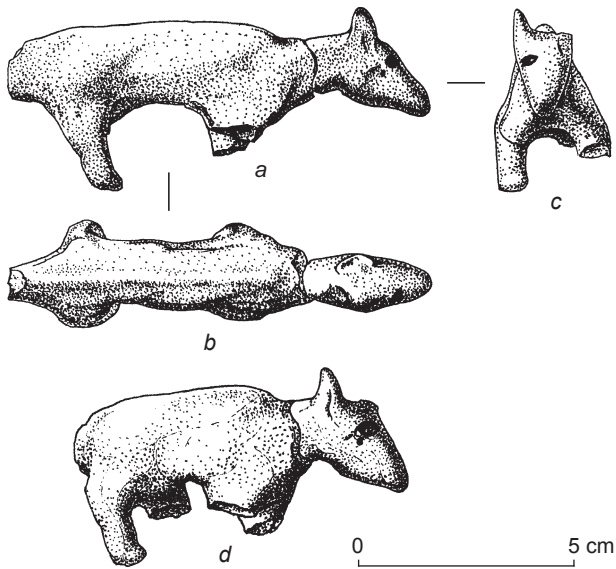


Fig. 2. Drawing of the reindeer figurine from Nizyamy VIII in various projections.

figurine was stabilized by the placement of the legs in a wide stance (Fig. 2, *c*). The missing tail might also have served as an additional support and counterbalance (?), providing some basis for the otherwise unexplainable thickness of its base.

The figure's head gradually widens from the nose towards the gently sloping forehead, triangular (?) ear lying flat to the head (Fig. 2, *a*), and neck (Fig. 2, *c*). The profile is made up of an expertly formed, slightly drooping lower lip and gently curved lower jaw distinctly separated from the elongated oval neck (Fig. 2, *a*, *d*). The mouth is not rendered in detail. A small hole in place of the right eye was created by a twig or piece of grass (?) that was burnt out during baking. It is likely that the artisan intentionally depicted the animal with one eye (Fig. 2, *a*, *c*).

The transition from the neck to the back includes the formation of a ridge between the shoulders, representing withers. The back remains slightly convex up until the tail. The clay at the animal's back is nipped, highlighting the prominently extended backbone (Fig. 2, *b*). This feature,

when taken with the forward-reaching neck and pointed head, emphasizes the slenderness of the animal. The preserved hind leg is not flexed or folded under the belly as is typical of the extremities of Scythian animal figures (Scythian Art, 1986: Ill. 16, 20, 23; and others). It is not perpendicular to the body, but shifted slightly forwards under the belly at a small angle. This stance could be for one of two reasons: either the artist followed the standard composition, or he wished to portray the tension and alertness of the animal standing its ground or ready to flee (Fig. 2, *a*).

V.M. Morozov argued that, judging by a number of features (the shape of the ears, nose, and body as a whole), the figurine resembles a deer, calm and peaceful in its static pose (Morozov, 1995: 23). The species attribution of the animal appears to be correct: the configuration and proportions of the head, body, and extremities point to a reindeer – a typical representative of the fauna in this region. The animal is rendered realistically, distinguishing it from many schematic images of ungulates depicted on Western Siberian ceramic vessels of the Chalcolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages (Kiryushin, Maloletko, 1979: Fig. 43; Metz, 1990: Fig. 2; Stefanov, Morozov, 1992: Fig. 2, 1, 4; Koksharov, 2004: Ill. 1, 8; Yakovlev, Terekhin, 1993: Fig. 1, 5).

Analogs of the figurine from Nizyamy VIII have not been found in the Ob region as of yet. A wooden elk-cow figurine with its body positioned similarly, extremities forming an angle under the animal's belly, was recovered from the Gorbunovo Peat-Bog in the middle Urals (Eding, 1940: 45, Pl. II). Distinguishing it from the Nizyamy figurine, the Gorbunovo elk-cow has eyes and small holes in its head, in which ears (or antlers) were inserted. In addition, the animal stands on long, straight extremities. This figurine is dated to the second half of the 3rd–2nd millennium BC (Oborin, Chagin, 1988: 29).

A sculptural representation of a bear head was found at the settlement site of Syroi Agan-1. The site is located on the left bank of the Ob, along the river's middle reaches, in the Nefteyugansk Region of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Districts (Yugra) of the Tyumen Province. V.A. Arefiev, an archaeologist from Nizhny Tagil, excavated the site and identified the figurine as a product of the Atlym population of the Late Bronze Age (2002). The three-dimensional bear head, measuring 24 mm by 19 mm by 19 mm, is made of fired clay. Despite its small size, the figure is quite realistic. It clearly exhibits the most important morphological features of this carnivore of taiga.

The figure's muzzle is beveled from the tip of the nose to the lower jaw. Wide, thick cheekbones, a slightly opened mouth, and a drooping lower lip are artfully rendered (Fig. 3, *b*). This attests to the high level of skill and keen power of observation of the ancient artisan, so familiar with this largest of the taiga animals. The bear, an animal known for its acute sense of smell, has two

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1034345>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1034345>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)