



Dogū (Clay Figurine)

Period: Final Jōmon period (ca. 1000–300 B.C.)

Culture: Japan

Medium: Earthenware

Dimensions: H. 2 1/4 in. (5.7 cm); W. 1 7/8 in. (4.8 cm)

Classification: Ceramics

Credit Line: Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Koizim, 1978

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Description

Clay figurines (dogū) of humans and animals were made throughout the Jōmon period, particularly during the latter half, and establish the beginnings of Japan's sculptural tradition. The largest percentage of these figures, including this statuette from northern Honshū, comprises highly stylized females with enlarged breasts, hips, and stomachs presumed to have been fertility symbols.

Because some of these figurines appear to have been broken intentionally, it has been hypothesized that they were used in rituals meant to cure physical ailments. It seems that

once the affliction was ceremonially transferred to the figure, the clay image was discarded. This speculation would explain why most dogū are found scattered around or in refuse heaps rather than in graves