

# REVIEWS

## Japan, Before Buddhism.

By J. Edward Kidder, Jr.

London: Thames and Hudson, 1959. Vol. 10 of *Ancient Peoples and Places*, edited by Dr. Glyn Daniel. 282 pp.

Remarkable advances have been made, since the end of the Pacific War, in almost every field of Japanese humanistic study. But advance in the investigation of economic, social and religious life in Japan before the introduction of Buddhism in the sixth century A.D. has been truly exciting. The forward leap has come, in part, from the rise of a more critical attitude toward the eighth-century histories —particularly toward the myths in the *Nihongi* and the *Kojiki*. But, in addition, extensive archaeological work at “pre-historic” sites all over Japan has given us a mass of new, reliable evidence that is certain to deepen our understanding of Japanese life in periods when the state was being formed and when some of the more fundamental features of Japanese culture were

beginning to appear. Thus the Western student can not but be enthusiastic about *Japan, Before Buddhism*, a book that has been written by a trained archaeologist and that provides a competent summary of recent archaeological findings. The book is divided into four chapters—one for each of the four major pre-Buddhist periods: paleolithic (pre-pottery); neolithic (Jomon); bronze-iron (Yayoi); and proto-historic (burial tombs). In each chapter the archaeological data for that period is presented topically, with emphasis being given to pottery, tools and burial practices. More than one hundred excellent illustrations are included, and these have been tied closely to the text. For the student who wishes to probe more deeply into particular subjects the author has appended a selective

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list of Japanese and English publications.

In addition to writing a readable, accurate summary of archaeological data, Dr. Kidder draws a few conclusions about the connection between technological improvements and certain spurts of economic growth. He has given us a better appreciation, for example, of the importance of the introduction of wet-rice agriculture, and of the introduction and use of iron and horses. But in the more complex area of social relationships and religious beliefs he is more reticent. It may be too early to attempt analyses, on the basis of better evidence, about the process of social and religious change in those early centuries. But a number of Japanese scholars are devising some meaningful patterns. In primitive religion, for instance, excellent contributions are being made by Toshiaki Harada, Minoru Shibata, Ichiro Hori, Harukuni Miyaji, Komazo Mizoguchi, Takashi Saito, Iwao Oba, Yasu-

hiko Matsumae and others. Thus, it is to be hoped that Dr. Kidder's distinguished study will soon be followed by analyses and interpretations which will give us an even clearer insight into Japanese life in that formative, pre-Buddhist age.

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### JAPAN, BEFORE BUDDHISM

J. Edward Kidder

- I The Palaeolithic and Mesolithic Periods
- II The Neolithic Period  
The sites, food supplies, tools and pottery, customs and symbols, and neolithic man.
- III The Bronze-Iron Age  
Rice-growing communities, burial methods, bronze equipment, the pottery, customs and religious practices.
- IV The Protohistoric Period  
The communities, iron, the tombs, the contents of tombs, the tomb sculptures, the shrines.