

ISOMAE Jun'ichi 磯前順一, *Dogū to kamen: Jōmon shakai no shūkyō kōzō* 土偶と仮面—縄文社会の宗教構造. Tokyo: Azekura Shobō, 1994. 236 pp. ¥8,240 (cloth), ISBN 4-7517-2420-7.

THOUGH STILL IN HIS early thirties, Isomae Jun'ichi has already made a reputation for himself as a leading scholar of Jōmon figurines and masks. *Dogū to kamen* is a collection of eight papers written between 1985 and 1992; seven of the papers have been published previously, though the author has made some corrections and amendments. The first chapter deals with masks and the rest with various aspects of clay figurines, with particular emphasis on the Tōhoku region in the Late and Final Jōmon phases.

Isomae's overall approach is perhaps best described as "contextual." Criticizing overly simplistic "theoretical reductionism" that attempts to account for Jōmon ritual as a whole, he argues that each region needs to be seen on its own terms. A reference to medievalist Amino Yoshihiko on page 1 suggests that Isomae sees his work as part of a general trend towards the decentralization of Japanese history. While I agree that detailed studies of the context of figurine use and production are essential, I am less convinced by Isomae's assumption (p. 1) that archaeological "types" are direct symbolic representations of past social groups, an idea that has received considerable criticism in Western archaeology over the past decade or so. Although Isomae's field is religious studies rather than archaeology, my most general criticism of the book is that he fails to transcend a very archaeological obsession with typology and classification.

The first chapter deals with masks (and was published originally in *Kōkōgaku zasshi* 77/1, not 76/4 as stated on page 3). Apart from a couple of shell examples from Kumamoto, Jōmon masks are made of clay and are mostly rather small, with a diameter of between ten and twenty centimeters. Masks first appeared in western Japan in the early Late phase but then spread east; in the Final Jōmon they are known only in the eastern archipelago. Only some fifty-eight masks have been discovered from thirty-six sites. Thus, although Jōmon masks have a wide distribution, they are numerically rare

compared with figurines. According to Isomae this rarity suggests that masks were maintained and used at the level of the community and its leaders rather than at the individual level. The masks functioned to reinforce the identity of the community (p. 74).

The other two main chapters deal with figurine symbolism and with what Isomae calls *kussetsuzō dogū* (clay figurines with bent limbs). The former of these two chapters is in fact a general overview of Jōmon figurines, which Isomae sees as symbols of motherhood that were intentionally broken and discarded as part of their associated ritual. Primitive beliefs about the cyclical nature of death and rebirth are hypothesized to be the basis of this figurine cult. This chapter is the most accessible of the whole book. In contrast, the following chapter is a very detailed analysis of the “bent-limbed” figurines of the Tōhoku in the Late and Final phases. This category of figurine is relatively rare (though as Isomae himself notes, since most figurine finds are fragments it is often difficult to reconstruct the original body shape). One focus here is on stylistic relations with other types of figurines and ritual artifacts, Isomae suggesting that in the Final Jōmon these “bent-limbed” figurines formed part of a whole Kamegaoka ritual structure.

The remaining chapters, all short, discuss the so-called “tubular figurines” and a distinctive type of hollow figurine with what appear to be goggles over the eyes. A final short section examines some general issues of Japanese archaeology and prehistoric religion. Isomae argues that the study of Jōmon society has lost its sense of direction, constrained by the overly materialistic approaches developed originally in the 1930s as a reaction to the “racial” prehistory of Tsuboi Shōgorō and others. This earlier holistic anthropology split into distinct schools of archaeology and physical anthropology that concerned themselves, respectively, with detailed empirical studies of ceramics and human skeletal remains. Another school of archaeology headed by Wajima Seiichi developed a Marxist perspective on the Jōmon as a classless society. All of these approaches, however, tended to marginalize the study of Jōmon ritual. Over the past few years much work has been done on data collection of Jōmon figurines (e.g., ISOMAE and AKAZAWA 1991, NATIONAL MUSEUM 1992), but Isomae argues convincingly that there is still a need for greater sophistication in the analysis of these objects (p. 212).

This volume contains much that will be of interest to anyone working seriously on Jōmon ritual, but I am not convinced that it is worth its hefty price. The lack of an index makes the book difficult to use as a work of reference. Although the collection has more of a feeling of overall coherence than many such works (perhaps because of the author’s refreshingly reflexive approach to interpretation), the articles are mostly reprinted from mainstream journals that are available in libraries outside Japan. Despite these criticisms, it must be said that this volume fulfills its author’s aim, comprising a solid contribution to the academic communication between archaeology and religious studies.

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