

## BOOK REVIEW

Oba Iwao: Matsuri [Festivals]·[Subtitle:] Archaeology searches for festivals in Ancient Japan.

229 pages, Gakuseisha Publishing Co., 2nd edition. Tokyo, 1971.

The author shows what kind of information archaeological spade work so far has yielded to our knowledge of religious rites previous to the construction of shrine buildings. He is certainly the right man for this task. In 1923 he graduated from the Section of History of Kokugakuin University in Tokyo. From then on he devoted all his life to archaeological studies *ex officio*, after having been given a position in the Bureau of Shrines (*Jinja Kyoku*) of the Ministry of Interior Affairs. In 1949 he was appointed professor of Archaeology, at Kokugakuin University, his *Alma Mater*, after having received the Ph.D. degree the year before. Numerous professional publications stem from his pen.

The book under review is addressed to the educated general public, rightly assumed to be interested in the topic. Archaeological sites with cult remains, testify mainly to the worship of mountains, rocks, lakes, ponds and swamps, and islands in the open sea. The island of Oki on the old sea route for the traffic to South Korea, to the Northwest of Kyushu, was found to have been in antiquity on the same level of sacredness as the sanctuary of Ise later times on. In modern times this island was fortified and, therefore, inaccessible even to Japanese nationals, and only after the end of the Pacific War, its archaeological investigation became possible. This yielded abundant results. Traces of worship of islands, or rather of the worship of island gods, were found also in the Japanese Inland Sea. Other objects of worship were springs, which were important as sources of life for wet rice cultivation. Mountain passes were believed to be dangerous domains of gods which the travelers had to placate with offerings.

On these various sites of worship remains of pottery, supposed to have been vessels containing food and rice wine offerings, were found. Bronze mirrors and bronze bells (*dôtaku*) were also found here and there. Apparently it was the general practice to bury all these objects when the worship was over. In a few cases worship sites were found near graves (*tumuli*), which indicates that the souls of aristocrats were worshiped as ancestor gods. As to the age of the sites of worship, it can be said that the majority of them belongs to the later stages of the Yayoi and the succeeding *tumuli* period, anyhow before the dawn of the historical time, since they contain ceramics, and mirrors and bronze bells, all datable.

The general conclusion reached by the author is that the religion of the prehistoric Japanese was not essentially different from that in historic times, only the acts of worship were simpler and closer to nature, and not yet as elaborate as later when religion was expressed within a higher cultural context.

M.E.

## ERRATA

The Editor wishes to apologize for the errors which have crept into the printing of our previous issue, Vol. 33, 1 (1974) in: A.W. Sadler, At the Sanc-

tuary . . .

p. 19, line 2. Correct to: "sorted into two rows"

Diagram on p. 25 should follow colon on p. 26, line 8

Diagram on p. 26 should follow colon on p. 27, line 10

p. 28, line 3. Correct to: "the priest must observe"

p. 28, line 22, by mistake, repeats line 14. The omitted line should read:

Ans. "That is a special case. Most of us do have *gagaku*. The

Captions beneath plates are in the correct order, but the photographs are not. The photograph above the caption for plate III should be exchanged for the one above the caption for plate I.