

Jomon of Japan: The World's Oldest Pottery. By DOUGLAS MOORE KENDRICK.
New York: Columbia University Press, 1995. 144 pp. \$110.00.

This book conveys the excitement of studying ancient Jomon pottery in Japan, and one hopes that its impact will be to spread some of that enthusiasm and scholarship. Its strength lies in its up-to-date description of the Jomon ceramic variation and continuity over time and geography. A detailed description of the decorative variations used to seriate Jomon pottery is provided. The book is well illustrated, with about 75 pages devoted to photographs that emphasize surface texture and relief decoration. The book provides an excellent introduction to the study of Jomon pottery, with many authoritative statements by well-known Japanese scholars.

The foreword by J. Edward Kidder Jr. reviews the chronometric developments that placed Japanese Jomon pottery at the beginnings of a hunter-gatherer, pottery-making tradition. Douglas Kendrick's first chapter elaborates the thesis that Jomon pottery is the world's oldest. He reviews from the point of view of a nonspecialist some of the controversies regarding this thesis, such as the dating of sites with early pottery from other areas of the world. He also relates possible scenarios about the invention of pottery. Unfortunately, the descriptions of the dating and pottery technology are sufficiently oversimplified that misinterpretation may result. A frustrating lack of references gives an impression of imprecision (e.g., "many archaeologists . . .", "there might have been a gap of up to two thousand years . . ." [para. 3, p. 3]). In one example, he states "Thermoluminescence figures thoroughly." This statement confuses sampling procedures and interpretation. Perhaps he means that radiation in soils must be tested in addition to the ceramics in order to maximize precision in dating. In reference to dendrochronology, he states "It follows that as calibration cannot be used for the first 4000 years of the Jomon period, it has not been used at all in this book for the C14 dates for Japan." If known points in a chronology can be calibrated, why not use them? His conclusion that "even the present state of our knowledge makes it irresponsible for us to ignore scientific datings" is somewhat unbelievable, given his thesis (as stated in the title and elsewhere) that Jomon pottery is the world's oldest.

Certainly in Japan there are more sites with a pre-10,000-year-old date for pottery than elsewhere. However, excavation of such sites has been a focus of Japanese archaeology for several decades. Several of these sites have layers of volcanic ash descended about 11,000 years ago that are present as strata above them, so we should probably make the date of pottery earlier than 10,000 years ago in Japan. In this reviewer's opinion, we should also consider the Japanese development of pottery as part of an East Asian cultural complex; at least two sites for which pre-10,000 year old dating seems acceptable to this researcher are Gasya in the Amur River valley of the Russian Far East, and in the Xien Ren Dong in Jiangxi, China.

As regards pottery technology, the claim that "Present evidence indicates that cooking pots were invented independently in at least three parts of the world" (p. 3) is given without any evidence that the vessels were, in fact, cooking pots, in spite of much recent chemical research on residues in pottery vessels. The statement that "Once the pottery-making technique had been invented and found useful, it was so simple that it is hard to believe that it would not have been transmitted far and wide overland within centuries rather than thousands of years" is not a data-based conclusion.

First, considerable variation in the techniques of pottery making and the sequences of manufacture is found from region to region; second, we do not know

that it was simple since many of the supposed “clay bodies” that were chosen to make it have physical properties that make formation extremely difficult; and last, calculating the rate of transmission is difficult given the frequency of excavations of dubious validity. “The pots acquire their colour from the minerals in the clay, notably iron, the heat of the flames, and their contact with embers and ash. They retain it as they cool . . .” (pp. xiii–xiv). Pots are colored, and that color will change by varying the atmosphere of a firing. This will affect the oxidation state of iron, perhaps in combination with other minerals; at very low temperatures the presence of carbonaceous material will darken the color. If low-fired, pottery color will change to an oxidized red during cooling unless it has a composition that makes it well-sintered and glassy, and impermeable to oxidation by air during cooling. The surprising aspect of much early Jomon, Chinese, and Russian pottery is that it is gray in color and reduced, implying a special technology different from that practiced elsewhere—for instance for the mostly red, orange and grey mottled pottery of Southwest Asia.

Much has been written since many of the references cited; for instance, Jean-François Jarriage has excavated at Mehrgarh for many seasons and published a monograph, that renders the Allchin reference no longer relevant. However, typos are rare, although one example is page 39—many instead of may.

Even though the book is oversimplified for the nonspecialist, it still contains meaningful discussions—the summary of Jomon pottery from pages 21 to 63 is the best available in English. To surpass it would require the integration of visits to many museums and regional archaeological institutes as well as familiarity with the 300-plus archaeological site reports available each year that include information on Jomon pottery.

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The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature: The Subversion of Modernity. By SUSAN NAPIER. London and New York: The Nissan Institute/Routledge Japanese Studies Series, 1996. 256 pp. \$17.95.

Susan Napier’s earlier book, *Escape from the Wasteland* (Harvard University Council on East Asian Studies, 1991), concentrated on the work of two modern writers, Mishima and Ōe, and the roughly fifteen-year period in which they were both writing. The book currently under review takes the opposite strategy: if the first was limited in scope but explored its topics in-depth, the new book would be better described as extremely broad in scope but less analytically concentrated. As in the first book, Napier organizes her discussion of literary works around historically conditioned thematic nodes—“Woman Lost” in the postwar period is one chapter’s theme, for example—but in this case the literary texts addressed number nearly 100, and include examples from early Meiji (and even earlier if we include the references to Saikaku and *Genji*) all the way up to the late 1980s; some 30 authors are represented (although only 24 are included in a “Biographical reference” section at the back of the book). These authors include internationally known figures such as Kawabata, Abe, Akutagawa, and Ōe; lesser-known but canonized writers such as Izumi Kyōka, Miyazawa Kenji, and Ishikawa Jun; popular writers of the likes of Murakami Haruki and Tsutsui Yasutaka; and virtual unknowns such as Nakajima Ton, Yumeno