Flame-style deep bowl

On display

Title/Description: Flame-style deep bowl

Object Type: Bowl

Materials: Earthenware

Measurements: h. 330 mm

Accession Number: 1081

Historic Period: Middle Jomon period (c. 3500-2500 BC)

Production Place: Asia, East Asia, Japan

Deep coil-built bowls date to the earliest Jōmon phases. During the Middle Jōmon phase a number of elaborate types developed in various parts of Japan, notably these flame-style pots, which have mostly been found in Niigata Prefecture in northwest Honshu (see Pearson, 1992: nos. 47-51). In some examples the 'flames' are pierced and as high as the body of the pot itself, but in this fine and well-preserved bowl the rim decoration is more restrained. It was formed by cutting and incising slabs of clay to form deep spirals and swirls.

Bowls of this kind are likely to have had a ritual use; the presence of carbonised deposits in some examples suggests that this may have included their functioning as cooking pots. Human bones have also been found interred in them, evidence of secondary burial practices.

Entry taken from *Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection* 3 volume catalogue, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997).

TO-BE-REPLACED-WITH-A-GAP

Jōmon, the name given to bronze-age, hunter-gatherer Japan, derives from pottery. In 1877 an American scholar discovered shards decorated by pressing cords into the surface of the wet clay 16,000 years ago. Jōmon is his translation of 'cord-marked'.

Deep coil-built bowls date to earliest Jōmon phases, but by the Middle Jōmon period the most spectacular of local elaborations were flame-style pots like this one. They have been found mostly in the Niigata Prefecture of north-west Honshu.

Decorated by cutting and incising slabs of clay to form deep swirls and spirals, this impressive flame bowl is surely too ornate for use as an ordinary cooking pot. It may well have had a ritual and funerary function – human bones have been found in vessels of similar quality.

—

Ian Collins, journalist and writer