

Kokugakuin University Museum
Special Exhibition

The Genealogy of Japanese Idols

April 26, 2016 (Tue) – June 12, 2016(Sun)

Why are our hearts moved by idols?

Despite having human form, idols existence brings forth a life power that surpasses mortals. This exhibition following transitions in media produced by humans, looks at the history of Japanese performing arts, allowing us to contact things not in the here and now as well as transcendental beings such as deities (*kami* 神) and Buddhas.

Looking back at primitive images and considering the archetypes of contemporary idols allows us to consider their origins.

Highlights of the Exhibition

Chapter I. Archetype of Modern Idols

As for the idols we can encounter in twenty-first century Japan, they are presented as a narrow gateway to success for those who want to be professional actors, singers, and entertainers. However, this archetype can also be viewed much earlier in headlines from the eighteenth century, the middle of the Edo Period (1603-1868). The reality of these idols is introduced and reproduced in media from their eras.



Uriame Dohei ga den (A story of Candy vendor Dohei)

Edo period , 1769

Private collection

Chapter II. Festival at the beginning

In the past public performing arts (*geino* 芸能) and festivals (*matsuri* マツリ) were linked. Prayers, singing, dancing, and serving the deities mixed the sacred and profane. Today, we commonly think of festivals as being for entertainment, however, originally festivals were a means of breaking down barriers to the supernatural.



Iwato kagura no kigen
Edo period , 19th century C.E.
Kokugakuin University

Chapter III. Invisible Bodies of Deities



Originally humans could not view deities or spirits, so they are represented as sculptures shapes similar to humans. Looking at these images, we can see the ambiguous borders between the human world and the supernatural. Where is the core of these images? Viewing Buddhist statues, images of kami, and primitive sculptures, we see the search for the roots of anima's forms.

Shakoki dogu
Final Jomon period
Kokugakuin University Museum

Japan

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