

Japanese culture report example

[Environment](#), [Nature](#)



Question 1

In terms of art, Ashikaga (Muromachi) period (1338 – 1573 A. D.) is characterized by the emergence of the flower arrangements and landscape gardening, introduced by the Zen monks, who brought these artistic expressions from China. Although this type of art has Chinese influences, its adoption and adaptation to Japanese style, in constructions such as Golden and Silver Pavillions and Ryoanji rock garden indicate that the Japanese art is linked with nature, as it finds its inspiration in this source. Moreover, Shinto, a representative Japanese religion, worships nature, translating the emotional connection between man and nature through art. Therefore, the religious confessions represent another example to illustrate that there is an intimacy between the Japanese art and nature. Heian period, defined in religious terms by Buddhism, also emphasizes the intimacy between art and nature in Japan, as during this period there was built the Byoudin Temple (“Phoenix Hall”), which is a shinden construction that makes clear references to Phoenix bird. The end of Heian period represented the advent of a new era, manifested in politics, society, but also in arts and culture. As such, specific for this period are the paintings representing seasons and nature, defining, yet again, the strong relationship between Japanese art and nature. Later, during the colonization period, when the Portuguese started to make trades with Asians, decorative screen painting was introduced and adopted by the Japanese art. In Tokugawa (Edo) period, the interest for nature was visible in the art of the period, representative for this being the Toshogu Shrine, which shows a vivid interest for animal wood sculpting and carving, showing like this the nature’s influence upon Japanese art, which was a

reflection of the fact that nature was actually entrenched in the Japanese communal mental, which worshiped nature in art or religion (such as Buddhism). Japanese people's interest towards the nature and their communion with nature took various naturalistic expressions throughout ages and historical periods. It is true, to the establishment of the intimacy between Japanese art and nature it contributed also the country's relationship with foreign cultures, among which, a very strong influence has been China. In addition, Japan's politics, its social development and its history, overall, impacted the artistic expression of its people. Therefore, the intrinsic sensibility of the Japanese people, complemented by the country's capacity of absorbing foreign cultural influences, lead towards the settlement of a vivid and visible intimacy between art and nature, comprising the Japanese beliefs and sensibility in relation to nature.

Question 2

In Ashikaga (Muromachi) period, Japan was ruled by shoguns who centralized the state's power. The shogun's power was gradually disseminated towards the daimyo (the feudal lords), who belonged of aristocratic, warrior families. This power structure permitted for various conflicts to occur between the Ashikaga warrior families, driven by political interests and between Ashikaga military elites and their vassals or between military proprietors and village people, at local level. This structure allowed for the development of semi-autonomous villages, which at the social level signified the increasing of the trade between Japan and mainland China. The structure of power in Muromachi period was given mainly by the relationships and connections between the shogun and the network of feudal families. On the other hand,

this period was also characterized by major structural shifts, as it represented the decentralization of power, during the Onin Wars. Moreover, the interaction with Europeans, as a result of the arrival of the Portuguese in Asia, guided by their trade interest but also by their intention of preaching the Christianity and finding new adepts for this religion, represented a revolution from the traditional Japanese weapons to firearms, which made the provincial conflicts more violent and the quest for power more open. Therefore, on these above mentioned evidence, the power structure in Ashikaga period can be characterized by feudal – vassal relationships, violent outbursts or provincial upheavals.

Regarding the cultural aspects of this period, it mainly developed around monasteries, which cultivated arts and learning. This period was characterized by the development of No drama, the tea ceremony. The monochrome painting was very popular in this period, and in the same time the Ashikaga era meant the proliferation of the renga (linked verses) in poetry, making it more cursive, as it expressed the Japanese sensibility. As the culture flourished around the monasteries, the Zen monks brought to Japan the Chinese flower arrangement as well as the landscape gardening, which favored the emergence of the Zen culture in Japan. As such, illustrative in this sense is the Golden and Silver Pavilions or the ryoanji rock garden. This period was also characterized by the traditional art, as people dedicated to culture would engage in poetry, gardening, architecture, and painting of traditional influence.

The arts recognized a real development in this period, both because of the foreign influences, but also due to a discovery of the local artistic identity of

the Japanese people. Therefore, important arts, such as flower arrangements and landscape gardening (specific to Zen culture), linked verse in poetry, No drama or tea ceremony emerged during this period.