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Introduction

Japanese art encompasses a wide range of art media and styles which is inclusive of calligraphy on silk and paper, ancient pottery, sculpture, ukiyo-e woodblock prints, ink painting, the more recent manga, kirigami, origami and kirie. These arts have their foundation on the wide range of human habitation in Japan which is up to the 10th millennium BC to present day. Going by history, Japan is exposed to sudden invasions that come with alien and very new ideas which are then followed by long periods of literally minimal contact with the rest of the globe. This has caused Japanese art to be very dynamic. With these kinds of interactions, Japanese art culture has developed and changed in various aspects. This is because, their art has the ability to absorb, imitate and finalize by assimilating the elements adopted from foreign culture that they then complement with the desired aesthetic preferences.

Both professionals and amateurs prefer painting as their artistic expression. They in most cases used brushes rather than pens which have changed over time. As it will be discussed later in this article, the Edo period which brought a rise of popular culture developed the style of woodblock prints which were termed the ekiyo-e which developed to be a very major form in the art while its techniques were tuned finely producing admirable and colorful prints of almost everything including schoolbooks and daily news. During this time, there was a sculpture was perceived to be less sympathetic a medium to make artistic expressions. Most of this Japanese sculpture was connected to religion for which the use of this medium took a declination curve upon the lessened importance that had been connected to the traditional Buddhism.

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Currently, Japan poses as a major rival to other modern nations in the contributions that they stand to make in the fashion industry, modern art and in architecture as they come up with creations that are global, multi-cultural and modern as well.

In the 7th and 8th Century, the complex and earliest art from Japan was developed or rather produced while it was greatly connected to their religion, Buddhism. The 9th Century witnessed the turning away of the Japanese art from the Chinese thus they developed indigenous forms of expression making their secular arts to be viewed with more importunacy aspect. This progressed to the 15th century in which their secular and religious art had flourished. Therefore, looking at this issue analytically, it is with no doubt to claim, that the Japanese art has Chinese effect in it despite also having religious foundation.

Asuka and Nara Art as a Demonstration of the Influence of China to Japanese Art

These arts gain their name from the occupancy of the Japanese government which between the years 552 to 710 was located in the Asuka Valley and later progressed to occupy the Nara until the year 784. During this period there was a massive invasion by the Asian culture that resulted to a rather influential art change in Japan. Before this, there the major arts that existed were Jomon art, Yayoi art and Kofun art.

It is of great importance to understand how Jomon, Yayoi and Kofun art developed to as it can be differentiated with the Asuka and Nara art. The Jomon were actually the first settlers of Japan. Their naming was after the cord markings which were notable decorations on the surfaces of clay

vessels that they designed. They settled in this region though initially they had been nomadic hunters and gatherers. What their art is distinguished with is actually clay figurines known as dogu that had been crafted and decorated lavishly, crystal jewels and pottery storage vessels. On the other hand, yayoi art who were the next immigrants to nearby Tokyo came in with new dimensions to art. They introduced in Japan wheel-thrown, kin-fire ceramics and they were the founders of manufacturing bronze bells (dotaku) and copper weapons. The third stage of art in Japan history is the Kofun art. It modified the Yayoi art. At this point, it is critical to identify that the Kofun were immigrants from other parts of Asia and upon their arrival in Japan, they modify the Yayoi art which had already taken root. This hereby demonstrates that Japanese art has been absorbing art from other regions from decades ago. In this period, art was influenced and developed by politics. Symbols of political parties, bronze mirrors and clay sculptures termed haniwa were created and were then erected outside tombs. This culture spread throughout the nation.

The earliest Buddhism oriented art in Japan was the Greco-Buddhist art of Gandhara which was between the 1st to the 3rd AD. On this sculpture, there were realistic rendering and flowing dress patterns in which they superimposed the artistic traits that originated from Korea and China. The Chinese Northern Wei Buddhist art got through to the Korean isthmus. Japan then brought in the Buddhist icons. The evidence of these movements is the Chugu-ji Siddhartha and the Koryu-ji Miroku Bosatsu statues. What is reflected at this point is that Korea is just transmitters of the Buddhism religion and art. The main origin is literally China. The Japanese Fujin Wind

God, Nio guardians and the almost-classical floral patterns that were evident in temple decorations are further demonstrators of the Buddhist tradition of Japan in 538 to 552.

Japan is still home to the earliest Buddhist structures while it also homes the oldest wooden buildings which are in the Far East and the Horyu-ji which is in the southwest of Nara. To begin with is the temple Crown Prince Shotoku that was built in the 7th Century. The characteristics of this building demonstrate varying Chinese-originating traits. It has 41 independent buildings. The most important of the 41 are the Goju-no-to which is a five storey Pagoda and the main Buddha worshiping hall known as Kondo or Golden Hall which stand at the center of an open area that has been surrounded by a roofed cloister. These two important buildings indicate a artistic borrowing from the Chinese. To be rather specific, the Kondo adopts the style of Chinese worship halls. It is a post and beam construction and of two storey which is capped by an irimoya which is a hipped-gabled roof from ceramic tiles.

The Kondo's inside is decorated further with ancient art. To begin with, there is a rectangular platform which is very large as most important sculptures of the period are located. The central of it is an image of the Shaka Trinity. The first is the historical Buddha that is flanked by two bodhisattvas, then there is the sculptor Tori Busshi which is a sculpture cast in bronze which acts as homage to Prince Shotoku who was recently deceased. The Guardian Kings of the Four Directions is located at the four corners. The Tamamushi Shrine is also housed at Horyu-ji which though wooden replicates the Kondo. It is set on highly placed wooden base that has been decorated with figural

paintings, that has been executed in a medium of lacquer mixed with mineral pigments.

The 8th Century had its focus on Todai-ji which was a temple building in Nara. This was constructed as the headquarter to network the temples in the provinces. This has been termed as one of the most ambitious religious complex that was erected in the early centuries with the main objective being to worship Buddha. In it, there is a 53 feet Buddha that was enshrined into the main Buddha Hall, or the Daibutsuden which is a Rushana Buddha which is a respected figure representing the magnitude and importance of Buddha hood.

The Japanese Heian Art and the Chinese Aspects

The period between 774 and 835 witnessed the developments of the early Heian art. In this period, there was a lot of development and growth in power and wealth in Nara. As a result, the priest known as Kukai travelled to China where his soul intent was to study Shingon which forms the Vajrayana Buddhism. After completion of this, he was back to Japan in 806 where he brought with him different aspects of art. The central of the Shingdon worship exists a mandalas which is about the spiritual universe diagrams. This then started to influence how the temples would be designed. The Japanese art at this time was further modified when they adopted the stupa which originally been associated with Indian architectural form though the Japanese one adopted the Chinese style pagoda. Buildings that demonstrate these influence in Japan include Pagoda of Muro-ji, Byodo-in Phoenix Hall in Uji Kyoto and the pagoda in Wayo style at Ichijo-ji.

Chinese Painting in Muromachi Art

During 1338 to 1573 there were new secular ventures which also involved the trading missions between Japan and China. The trading had been organized by the Zen temples. In this process, there was massive importation of objects of art into Japan. It is the Japanese artists under the Zen Temples who accommodated the modification in the paintings. The imports ended up changing the subject matter to paint, as well as how the colors would be integrated in the paintings. In essence, the Yamato-e bright colors yielded to monochromes of painting in the Chinese approach in which the paintings generally possess black and white or different toning of a single color. This linkage between Japan and China can be demonstrated by the priest painter Kao of the legendary monk Kensu and the Taizo-in, Myoshin-ji that was the work of priest painter Josetsu.

Korean Influence on Japanese Art

Though minimal, there have been interactions between Japan and Korea for which Japan absorbed some of their art from this region and then incorporated it into their own as will be indicated in the discussion below. The influence began in the Asuka Period in which the Baekje availed technological and aesthetic direction in the Japanese arts and architecture. The evidence to this is the Tamamushi Shrine which demonstrates Korean art of the period. This shrine was a miniature of two story temple that was made from wood and was used as a reliquary. In addition, the Buddhist temple Asuka-dera in Japan was constructed by craftsmen originating from the Korean ancient kingdom known as the Baekje in 588.

In relation to sculptures, the Buddhist sculpture known as the Kudara Kannon in its translation is Baejke Guanyin which demonstrates the artistic relationship between Korea and Japan. Going by the Japan's naming of arts, it is thus correct to state that this wooden statue had either been carved by a Korean immigrant or brought in from the Korean Baejke. The Korean painter Baekga was invited to Japan in 588 whereas the Damjing the Korean priest moved to Japan in 610 where they trained the Japanese on how they would prepare painting materials and pigments. In addition, many Buddhist-sympathetic artists migrated to Japan in the 15th Century after they were exposed to neo-Confucianism in Korea. The Korean painter Yi Su-mun occupied Asakura where he developed Japanese ink painting. He was the founder of the Daitoku-ji paintings.

Japanese Art and the Global Art

While it is evident that Japanese Art has absorbed massively from the Asian countries mainly China and part of Korea, the rest of the world regards to Japanese as competitive art bearing in mind that is modern competitor.

However, Japanese art has become global. To be more specific, Japanese art is existing in the western nations and is highly regarded. To analyze this, it is appropriate to make attempts on how it got itself to the global panel.

Japanese art has had an influence on European art especially in impressionism. To begin with, the influence of Japan's art resulted from the trade unions and agreements that took root in the 1850s. There was thus increased exchange of goods between the west and Japan. The artistic exchanges were on the increase as well. The enthusiasm by the west for

Japanese decorative and graphic art was felt and fed to them through world fairs, published reports and books, word of mouth, museum exhibition, import shops, art academies and art dealers. Some Europeans who made this possible were French art critic Phillipe Burty.

Some of the earliest Japanese art that left footmarks on the west are the 1760 art by Isoda Koryusai that was later featured in the Tale of Genji. It caused aesthetic influence on Western artists. As a matter of fact, it was then regarded to as the Mary Cassatt. In addition, the 17th and 18th century witnessed massive exportations for Japanese ceramics mainly from Arita. Japanese lacquer had the same effect. Blue and white Japanese porcelain was not only exported to but was produced in Europe. The style that the West mainly adopted from Japan was the Kakiemon style which was evident through Chantilly manufactory in France and Meissen manufactory in Germany.

The modern impacts may however pay tribute to the 19th century. Merchant Ships could now move to Japan ending more than 200 years of seclusion. Japan was thus exposed to many nations. Photography and printing techniques was changed in this process. Europe and America carried with them Japanese ukiyo-e prints, ceramics, bronzes, cloisonné enamels, textiles and other forms of art that gained fame in the west. During this period, there was an increased artist migrations from one continent to another and this progressed to market Japanese art while Japan was also on the picture as it also imported some new artistic skills, techniques and ideas.

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