

# History of early japanese art- jomon to nara essay examples

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



The historical Japanese art covered a wide range of styles such as pottery, sculptures, calligraphy and ink painting. Most of the art and Japanese culture during this time was highly influenced by the Koreans. The Nara period as described in the history of Early Japanese Art featured the period between the years 645-794. It was recognized to the rise in power of the Buddhism religion (Mobile, 37). This was the period characterized by the construction of many temples in order to accommodate the rising number of worshippers and clergymen. Emperor Shomu was credited to the immense efforts of developing Buddhism. He ruled over the region between the years 729-749. The Buddhists were known for dealing with clay, wood, bronze and other substances to fill the temples. During this period, the colossal bronze Buddha (Daibutsu, 43) of Todai-ji was constructed in order to spread prosperity and protect the nation. This period also saw increased contact with China which brought about the modeling of paintings and sculptures.

The artistic aspect of Japan has been for many years since the early days where some practices such as pottery making can be dated way back twelve thousand years ago. This was brought about by various factors that contributed to the growth of art in Japan. Some of these facts include: their cultural relations with neighboring countries, the climate around Japan's island, the geographical position of Japan and the topography (Kleiner and Helen, 80). These factors will give a clear understanding of the development and growth of the Japanese art. However, this paper will focus on the periods between Jomon and Nara that occurred at around 10500 BC - the end of the 8th century. It will also discuss at least 4 artworks done during this period.

The Jomon period came in at around 11,000-300 BC and was characterized

by the migration of nomadic hunters and gatherers into permanent villages in Japan. This was brought about by the slow melting of ice that caused the sea levels to rise and isolate Japan from the mainland of Asia. It was also characterized by the creation of deep pots or jars of clay. These pots were made by hand by building up coils on top of each other (Kleiner and Helen, 88).

The Jomon lasted for very long and was therefore categorized into various phases. The first phase was called the Incipient Jomon that occurred between 10,500-8000 B.C. It marked the change from the Paleolithic and Neolithic ways of life. It marked the period when deep pots with pointed bottoms used for cooking, were among the oldest pots worldwide. The next phase was referred to as the Initial Jomon that took place between 8,000-5,000 B.C. (Young, Michiko and Hong 79). It marked the period during which climatic changes occurred and sea levels raised to separate the southern islands of Shikoku and Kyushu. It also brought about increased food supply acquired and processed using stone tools such as knives, axes and grinding rocks. The other phase was the early Jomon period between 5,000-2,500 B.C. The people in the area used depended on fish for food and thus the presence of shells. It also involved close trade ties between Kyushu and Korea. This brought about handicrafts that were cord-marked cooking and storage vessels, woven baskets, bone needles and stone tools. The other phases included the middle Jomon, the Late Jomon and the Final Jomon (Hall, 3). The Jomon art is credited to the Jomon people who made cord markings to decorate the surfaces of the clay vessels. These people were nomadic hunters and gatherers who settled to practice farming. Some of the artwork

they made included the statuette with snow glasses made of clay figurines known as dogu and crystal jewels. The vessels made were preciously decorated pottery for storage purposes (Hall, 109). There was also the large jar from Niigata Prefecture that was made during the Middle Jomon period. Another important work of art developed during this period was The Great Buddha at Todaiji in the Nara period. This lavishly decorated piece of art was made due to the Buddhism religion in the area. Other statues made during the Nara period as a result of Buddhism include: the Standing Kannon Bosatsu that was constructed at Mount Nachi Higashimuro-gun, Wakayama that was done during the Asuka period in the 7th century and was meant as a gift for Mr. Kitamata Tomeshiro and other shareholders, just to mention but a few (Okamura and Akira, 116).

The period in between the Nara and the Jomon has a variety of artworks done. An example of such artworks includes the Murasaki Shikibu that showed the portrait of a learned woman and also an author of the Tale of Genji which is the world's full-length novel. It was characterized by the new Chinese style that dominated the Nara Period and was later replaced by more cultural related styles that involved the people more in their natural surroundings. This came after various noble families had acquired control of the government and ruled on behalf of the emperor. This period saw the development of the masterpiece art Murasaki Shikibu's The Tale of Genji and Sei Shonagon's Pillow Book (Hall, 111).

Similarly the Kamakura Period (1185-1333), was the period when The Taira family that had dominated the imperial court was overthrown by the Minamoto family. This contributed to Minamoto no Yoritomo being given the

title of shogun by the court. He also put in place a military system of government at Kamakura that brought about the period of de facto rule by members of the warrior class. In the field of art, an effective style developed where the warrior spirit was maintained and statues of brave guardian deities by Unkei as well as other sculptors at the Southern Great Gate of Todaiji Temple were made. This saw the sculpture of Minamoto no Yoritomo being constructed. It was a beautiful piece of art that was done in memory of the brave warriors during the Kamakura Period (Young, Michiko and Hong 87).

The Attire of the Military Elite developed between the Heian period to the Edo period marked by the beginning of the sword, the most crucial possession a samurai had to have. The piece of art focuses on the arms and armor, saddler, the attire worn by the warriors and their portraits and handwritings. The exhibits available today include the Domaru Type Armor, lacing in Kashidori style and was red at the shoulders. This artwork characterized the Muromachi period. Similarly there was the Tachi sword that had been signed by Sada and made by Sadatoshi. It marked the Kamakura period. The Kamakura period marked the military tales such as the Tale of Heike which celebrated the exploits of the warriors. These pieces of work characterized the period between the Jomon and Nara ages. It had more developments made as people were making discoveries and innovations regarding the pre- historic era of Japanese art (Hall, 111).

## **Work Cited**

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