

# Discussion on the Evolution Causes of Japanese Ceramic Design Style

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**Abstract**—The reason why Japanese ceramics is widely known for its craftsmanship and characteristics is inseparable from the geographical environment and traditional culture of Japan. China, Korea and other countries have laid a good theoretical foundation for the development of Japanese ceramics, and provided a lot of model templates, making Japanese ceramics mature day by day. Taking Japanese traditional culture as the starting point, this paper analyzes the role and influence of Chinese culture on Japanese ceramic art, and Japanese self-exploration and adjustment in the process of its ceramic art development, so as to demonstrate the background conditions for the generation and formation of its ceramic style.

**Keywords:** *ceramic design, Japanese ceramic style, Chinese culture*

## I. INTRODUCTION

As Journalist Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904) wrote in his article "A Glimpse of Unfamiliar Japan", "everything in Japan is so exquisite, elegant, and amazing..." Even after a century, Japanese art still exudes unique charms which are all derived from the unique cultural characteristics of the Japanese nation. The sociology of art regards artistic practice as a "social phenomenon", and considers that artistic practice is the result of collective creation from generation to generation in the historical process. In this long historical process, a "habitus" of art field is bound to form in the field of society, and this kind of art habitus will affect all the artworks produced in the art field. Through the habitus in this art field, the art and audience generate an emotional resonance, reaching a consensus on art products.

## II. JAPANESE AESTHETIC STYLE AND ART TASTE

The Japanese islands are located at the junction of the Eurasian Continental Plate, the Pacific Plate, the North American Plate and the Philippine Plate. As a result, earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanoes are very active here. Natural disasters occur at a high frequency. This makes Japanese people having a sense of inherent fear and admiration toward the nature, shaping the unique aesthetic and artistic style of Japanese people.

### A. *The aesthetic characteristics of advocating nature*

The land of Japan is surrounded by sea all round. There are distinct differences between seasons. It is for this reason that Japan extremely has biodiversity which provides a rich source of inspiration for potters. The natural resources contribute to the rustic Japanese culture which emphasizes the beauty of harmony between man and nature.

In addition, Japanese aesthetic consciousness is deeply influenced by Chinese Zen thought. Zen interprets human's natural life state with the concept of nature. It requires observing Zen taste from the natural environment, experiencing Zen joy from people's daily life, feeling the realization to truth, and further achieving spiritual freedom and transcendence of life. The same is true of Japanese aesthetics. Japanese art connects nature with life, and generates emotional resonance in the combination of the two, emitting a perception of fugitive life and a sigh of "flowers don't wait for me", forming a lonely and indifferent emotional color, and shaping a unique Japanese aesthetic consciousness in fusion with Japanese culture.

### B. *Symbiosis and coexistence of practical aesthetics*

Japanese ceramic art is closely connected to life, so that its ceramic art both has practical value and artistic value, achieving a unity between the two values. Combining art and life is one of the most important concepts in Japanese artistic thought.

Combining artwork and daily necessities is one of the artistic characteristics of Japan. Japanese ceramic artists add artistic elements to the design of ceramic articles, and make articles in the nuances, making simple objects not simple, making art and life blended and interwoven, creating unique aesthetic value.

### C. *Pursuit for keeping improving the "technical beauty"*

The spirit of Japanese craftsmanship is widely acclaimed. The reason is that Japanese people are always striving for excellence in design and manufacturing, and set high standards for it. Each link and each step are required to be very specific and rigorous, emphasizing the importance of focus and the necessity for normative operation. Every

Japanese designer regards the spirit of craftsmanship as his professional philosophy, and pursues high standards and high quality of products, reflecting his spiritual pursuit of "technical beauty".

### III. THE INFLUENCE OF CHINESE CULTURE ON JAPANESE ART CULTURE

Chinese culture and Japanese culture are often intertwined; In Japanese culture, there are many traces of Chinese culture. Hence, it can be seen that the influence of Chinese culture on Japanese culture is far-reaching and has played a very important role.

#### A. *Painting*

Chinese painting has had a deep influence on Japanese painting style, especially in the pattern design of ceramics. During the 7th~9th centuries AD, the Chinese paintings input into Japan were called Tang paintings. "Yamato-e", "Kano School", Japanese ink painting and literati paintings all absorbed the form and content of Tang paintings to varying degrees.

Nomura Hitoshi, a potter in Edo period, founded the "Kyo-yaki" genre. Its pottery painting has a very typical Japanese style, and is gorgeous and elegant at the same time. His works attracted widespread attention once coming out and were praised by people. Nomura Hitoshi was active all round Kyoto, and went to many places to learn from relevant masters in his early years. He was particularly good at color painting. He applied color painting to ceramics and produced a variety of painted pottery. Most of his works were made in 1648-1657. Most of the remained works have been designated as national treasures, represented by "Wakamatsu ware pot" and "Maki-e pot".

Japanese ink painting was deeply influenced by the painting style of the Song and Yuan Dynasties in China. Japanese ink and wash painters transformed the authentic painting style of the Northern Song Dynasty into the intentional style of the Southern Song Dynasty. They no longer reproduced the beauty of landscapes by means of realistic painting. Instead, they added the aesthetic characteristics of Japan, and used the artistic style of the Southern Song Dynasty the expression form, creating more concise painting and ink paintings with richer levels.

The last Chinese painting that influenced Japanese art style was during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. In the Qing Dynasty, Chinese painting was mainly composed of flower and bird paintings and literati paintings. During the Edo period in Japan (during the same period), there were "Nanping School" learning the flower and bird paintings in Ming Dynasty and "Literati Painting School" learning literati paintings.

#### B. *Calligraphy*

According to the records in "Nihon Shoki", in 285 AD, the Korean Baekje commissioned an ambassador to Japan, and contributed a volume of "Thousand Character Classic"

and ten volumes of "The Analects", making Confucianism and Chinese characters begin to be spread in the upper noble society of Japan. Thereafter, Buddhism gradually spread to Japan and began to flourish. Chinese characters were popularized and promoted in Japan, and Chinese calligraphy had also attracted widespread attention from Japanese writers. In the era of Asuka, Goguryeo monk and painter Tan Zheng went east to Japan, and taught coloring, inking, and water-powered trip-hammer manufacturing and using techniques in Japan, which laid a certain foundation for the development of Japanese calligraphy.

On the basis of Chinese calligraphy, Japanese has created calligraphy fonts with its national characteristics and features. During the Edo period, calligraphy was used in the drawing of ceramics.

#### C. *Literature*

During the Nara period, Japan dispatched a large number of ambassadors to the Tang Dynasty in the West, bringing back many documents, books, poetry books, and artworks from China. Through a study and emulation on those works of Tang Dynasty, Japan's politics and ideology, culture and other fields were affected to some extent. In the early Heian Period, Japanese learned the essence of the works brought from Tang Dynasty while studying the culture of the Tang Dynasty.

To sum up, Chinese artistic style and characteristics posed a far-reaching influence on Japanese artistic aesthetics. While drawing on Chinese artistic characteristics, Japanese art and culture merged its national characteristics and features to form a unique Japanese art which is further applied to ceramic art and other artistic works, shaping into Japanese style.

### IV. DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE OF JAPANESE CERAMIC CULTURE

#### A. *Learning from foreign cultural nutrition*

Although Japan started nearly 1,000 years later than China in aspect of ceramics, Japanese people's hard-working spirit and perseverance made Japan's ceramics gradually flourish, possessing very outstanding artistic value. In the 5th century AD, Korea introduced China's high-temperature firing technology and wheeled molding to Japan, making Japanese successfully fired sueki and entered the pottery era from the crockery era. In the 8th century AD, The production process and procedures of Tang tri-color glazed ceramics was also introduced to Japan. Under the guidance of Chinese potters, Japan fired the first artificial glaze, Nara tri-color glazed ceramics. In the 12th century AD, as the craftsmanship of Chinese celadon, while porcelain and iron-glazed pottery became more and more mature, Japan also fired the ancient Seto with special characteristics. In the 17th century AD, taking the red glaze of China as an example, 日本が誇る有田焼名門, a potter in Japan, created Japanese painted porcelain. Looking at the development history of Japanese ceramic art, China can be regarded as its "good

teacher". It is precisely under the continuous maturity and development of Chinese ceramic art that Japanese ceramic art can make continuous progress and become increasingly perfect.

In addition, the development of Japanese pottery is also inseparable from Korean porcelain culture. Historically, China ruled the Korean peninsula, so that Chinese culture became quite common in Korea. Ceramic skills are also well-known and mastered in Korea, forming a porcelain culture with Korean characteristics. From 1592 to 1598, Japan started two invasion wars against Korea, taking away many Korean pottery artisans to make and manufacture ceramic crafts for Japan, so Japan ushered in the porcelain era.

#### *B. Rooting in the local cultural soil*

Although Japanese artistic characteristics and cultural styles have been influenced by China and Korea, no matter how far-reaching and profound the impact is, it cannot replace its original value culture. In Japanese cultural style, it always has distinctive features of Japanese nation. While studying and drawing on external cultures and characteristics, Japanese pottery artists adhered to the local traditions and characteristics, and based on the cultural characteristics of their nation, combined the learned technical skills with the original craftsmanship for innovation, transformation and fusion, forming a unique Japanese ceramic art style which enjoys a good reputation in the world and has been widely recognized and loved.

#### *C. Cultivating the social and cultural atmosphere in Japan*

The Japanese attach great importance to ceramic art, and their love for ceramic art is incomparable to any other nation. It is right for this reason that pottery artists enjoy a high status in Japan. There are many pottery genres in Japan. Representatives of each genre are regarded as "national treasure" level of figures in Japan, having a certain economic and social status. In addition, Japan also provides very good living conditions and environment for pottery artists. In order to encourage pottery artists or pottery companies to go to various exhibitions and fairs, Japan also bears the travel costs to ensure that ceramic culture can keep flourishing without declining. The Japanese government has also enacted corresponding laws and regulations to protect its cultural traditions. Japan adopted a variety of methods to publicize and protect ceramic art. It is precisely for this reason that many prestigious ceramic artists emerged in Japan. As a result, Japan's national culture was cultivated and improved.

### V. CONCLUSION

Japanese ceramic art undergoes a relatively long development course. From the early learning and drawing on, to the later forming its unique style and characteristics, it has undergone many stages of adjustment and change. But anyhow, Japanese national culture and characteristics are deeply rooted in such art and fused with ceramics. It can be said that the characteristics of Japanese art presented in these

ceramic artworks reflect the multiplicity and complexity of Japanese culture. And in the course of historical evolution, the sociality of Japanese art has also been integrated into Japanese social classes, religious beliefs, and political ideas, and other characteristics, forming a unique Japanese ceramic art design culture. China should learn from this idea for its own innovation and change, and maintain the fine traditions of Chinese nation to improve its culture and craftsmanship. In the local ceramic design, China should incorporate more ideas, humanistic spirit and aesthetic connotation of traditional Chinese culture and take the road of ceramic design development more in line with Chinese national characteristics.

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