

A History of Japanese Decoration 1868–1927

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In the history of Japan for about 2000 years, there are two times when Japanese culture changed a lot. At first, about 1400 years ago, Buddhism descended from China through Korea, and how to built buildings, the form of building, the form of clothing, etc. were told to Japan. All of them became the foundation of Japanese traditional culture.

Japanese culture ripened gradually in 1000 years of after that, and there was no big change. The time of Tokugawa shogun ate continued for 260 years from A.D.1600s. Since Japan was closing the country, culture unique to Japan ripened in the meantime. This became what is called traditional culture.

Japan opened a country to foreign intercourse in A.D. 1868. When a country was opened, the culture of Europe or U.S.A. came into Japan. The Japanese government planned to bring the modern civilization from Europe. According to the government plan, the overseas engineers were invited, and various things were built, or the young men studied abroad from Japan.

Japan was modernized gradually. The period is about 60 years. It is the time called Meiji and Taisyo in Japan. The Great Kanto Earthquake occurred in 1923, and since the buildings of the western classic style introduced from Europe collapsed, Japan began to change newer. It is the beginning of present age culture. Therefore, it is the interesting time when Japan changed a lot from 1868 till 1920s. I carry out the talk of the aspect of change of that time through the design of buildings and furniture.

Traditional Culture

In Japanese–style room, a floor is covered with Tatami mats and there are an "alcove" and designed wall shelves as decoration of the room. Some ornaments are centering on an alcove. Covering metal designed to conceal nails, the handle of fittings, openwork grating, etc. are the portions of the ornament of Japanese –style room.

Inflow of Western Culture

The ornament introduced from the west to Japan was showy and colorful to Japanese people. The easiest thing in it was the arch made to the opening of a brick wall. There had been no method of construction like brick–masonry in Japan. The straight line of a tree structure has been in use, and the curve had been very few moldings. The arch was

new. Therefore, when the Government building was made, it was considered to be new ornament culture to attach an arch window and to show it in the style of the West etc.

The architect invited to Japan built the pure Western-style buildings. The reception hall of Saigo residence etc. is the good example. The fittings and furniture were imported from Europe.

Also in local cities, the buildings of a new time were made. However, since there were few foreign designers in local cities, the local Japanese engineer built houses which resembled western-style. For example, the decoration of a temple etc. was diverted by the reason for resembling the Occidental classic style. It was strange molding when seeing strictly.

In big cities, such as Kyoto, direct Western culture flowed in like Tokyo. St. Xavier's Cathedral was built by activity of the missionary who came from France, and is the figure of the Gothic church in the 13th century. However, the technology which was excellent in the Japanese carpenter was efficiently employed in making the pillars from wood.

Penetration of modernization

About 30 years passed, many persons obtained the right Western culture. The Sapporo telephone exchange station was designed by such an engineer in western style.

The traditional house in Japan was not made so high. On the other hand,

Western-style building is made highly perpendicularly. Under the influence, stores in city became perpendicularly high buildings. Tomatsu's house is the good example. Although appearance changed, the interior did not change with the conventional Japanese construction.

Furniture

Changes of furniture were carried out more slowly than change of a building. Furniture is decided by the life-style. Since Japanese people lived in the Japanese-style room, so, the furniture had been Japanese-style. The western-style furniture was used in the royal palace, an aristocrat's European-style building, and the special place.

Prototype

The prototype of our present-day home is seen in the villa of Prince Saionji.

Appearance is in Japanese style, the Japanese room and Western-style room are put side by side. Whether there is a fireplace depends on the difference between rich and common. Japanese traditional furniture and western one are put side by side in our present-day houses. The ornament became simple.

To the present age

On the day when the Great Kanto Earthquake occurred the Imperial Hotel was completed. Since the building did not break, it became famous. Moreover, since the designer of this building was Frank Lloyd Wright representing the 20th century architect, Imperial Hotel became globally famous.

The building of the West till then was the form developed from the Greece era of 2000 years ago. Entering in the 20th century, new art culture started, and construction, furniture, and clothing changed. Mr. Wright is one of the men of the time, and is the builder who had big influence on the present-day. His ornament is geometrical and modern.

Conclusion

In 60 years, Japan was slowly modernized as the whole, taking in Occidental culture. It changed slowly truly especially in the place of a life of people. Japanese people are alive in the climate different from the West. The food obtained from nature is also different. It seems that the life-style was rapidly unchangeable and there is also a portion which does not change from now on. Since Japanese people live in the environment using linear long wood and thin paper, we tend to use the liner and superficial ornament. Moreover, since the national traits are loving nature, the foundation of Japanese color is the color of a tree, of a leaf, of the ground, etc. in the nature.