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JAPANESE ART

In the August issue of the MORRIS SOCIETY BULLETIN a succinct account was rendered of Lectures on Art Education by Professor E. F. Fenolosa, in which he sketched the history of Japanese fine art and compared it for both subject and form with European art. That such a comparison can be made must have come with surprise to many who have for decades accepted as correct the brilliant antithesis of Mr. Alfred East that "Japanese art is great in small things, but small in great things." This seemed so, simply because the "great things" were in little evidence, being hidden in private collections and temple treasuries, whereas the "small things" were overwhelmingly in evidence, as unfortunately such beautiful articles of daily use are among no other people on earth.

During Mr. Fenolosa's long residence in Japan he was closely associated, on the Imperial Art Commission and otherwise, with an eminent Japanese art critic, Mr. Kakasu Okakura, who has recently published a work showing just what ideals have inspired this Japanese art of "great things." This work should prove epoch-making in its sphere; and it is here summarized, in order to forward its usefulness, whether it subsequently be read in full or not. The gallant people just now proving themselves so great in the art of war are just as great

in the arts of peace; and the better they are appreciated at their true worth, the better will it be for the future peace and welfare of the world.

It is much to be regretted that no representative portfolio, with or without text, reproducing this fine art of Japan has yet been published. Only scattering examples can be found in the illustrations, some of which are colored, to W. Anderson's *Pictorial Art of Japan*, to *Kokka*, which is a Japanese art magazine of great merit, and to *L'Art Japonais* of A. Gonse. The *Artistic Japan* of S. Bing, shows rather the amazingly clever art of the realistic and popular schools, which Mr. Okakura decries, though alone in doing so. *The Secretary.*

NOTICES

Members of the Morris Society may secure several extra copies of both the August and September issues of the BULLETIN by addressing the Secretary, 301 E. Fifty-Sixth Street, Chicago, Ill. Members of the Morris Society will shortly be in receipt of a copy of the syllabus on the literary art of William Morris prepared by Professor R. G. Moulton of the University of Chicago; and their cordial thanks therefor are hereby conveyed to the donor.

LECTURE ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Society offers to the public a number of lectures as named below. For information as to dates and fees address Mr. Edmund Buckley, 301 E. Fifty-sixth Street, Chicago.

Oscar L. Triggs: "William Morris as Poet, Craftsman and Reformer;" "The Art of William Morris," illustrated by material or by slides; "Historic Stages of Painting," illustrated by slides.

Edmund Buckley: "Analysis of Decorative Art," illustrated by material; "Japanese Decorative Art," illustrated by material; "The Art of Walter Crane," illustrated by material or by slides.

Cora M. MacDonald, Denver, Colo.: "The Morris Movement—What Does It Mean?"

A SUMMARY OF
THE IDEALS OF THE EAST WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO THE ART OF JAPAN

BY KAKASU OKAKURA
London, 1903

INTRODUCTION
BY NIVEDITA OF RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA
Calcutta

Kakasu Okakura has long been known to his own people as the foremost living authority on Oriental archaeology and art. Although young, he was made a member of the Imperial Art Commission sent out in 1886 to study the art history and movements of Europe and the United States. This experience only confirmed Mr. Okakura's appreciation of Japanese art, and since that time he has powerfully promoted its thoroughgoing renationalization. He was made director of the Government Art School at Ueno, Tokyo, but resigned in 1897 rather than conform to the European methods insisted upon. Six months later he associated with thirty-nine young artists to found the Nippon Bijutsuin at Yanaka, Tokyo, which should support native ideas, though adopting what is best in Western work. The members of this institution carry on not only painting and sculpture, but the various decorative arts in lacquer, metal, pottery, and the like. Their names include such famous ones as Hashimoto Gaho, Kanzan, Taikan, Sessei, and Kazu. Mr. Okakura further served his government in classifying the art treasures of Japan, and in visiting China and India in order to study their antiquities.

IDEALS OF THE EAST

The range of ideals in Asia does not destroy its essential unity, for the communism of China and the individualism of India are united in that Ultimate and Universal which is involved in the religions that Oriental peoples alone have proved able to originate. This unity in complexity has been realized with especial clearness by the Japanese, whose Indo-Tartaric blood qualified them to imbibe from these two sources, and so to mirror the whole of Asiatic consciousness. It is in Japan alone that the historic wealth of Asiatic culture can be consecutively studied through its treasured specimens. The imperial collection, the Shinto shrines, and the opened dolmens reveal the subtle curves of Chinese workmanship from the Hang dynasty (202 B. C. to 220 A. D.). The temples at Nara are rich in representations of Chinese culture from the Tang dynasty (618-907 A. D.) and of that Indian art, then in its splendor, which so much influenced the creations of this classic period. The

treasure-stores of Japanese daimyos, again, abound in works of art and in manuscripts belonging to the Sung and Mongol dynasties (960-1368 A. D.); and, since in China itself the former were lost during the Mongol conquest, and the latter in the age of the reactionary Ming dynasty (1368-1662 A. D.), some Chinese scholars are now impelled to seek in Japan for sources of their own ancient knowledge. The Japanese are excellent curators of such a museum, for their singular genius leads them to dwell on all phases of the past even while they welcome the new. The Shintoist still adheres to his antique religious cult, while Buddhists still cling to each various doctrine that formed the basis of a new sect. The Yamato poetry and the Bugaku music, which reflected the Tang ideal, are a source of delight to this present, as are likewise the somber Zenist symbolism and the No dances, which were the product of Sung illumination. The history of Japanese art becomes in this way the history of Asiatic ideals, the beach where each successive wave of Eastern thought has left its sand ripple as it beat against the national consciousness. Art in Japan, precisely as elsewhere, is the expression of the highest and noblest in the national culture; so that, in order to understand it, one must pass in review the various phases of Confucian philosophy, the different ideals which the Buddhist mind has from time to time revealed, those mighty political cycles which one after another have unfurled the banner of nationality, the reflection in patriotic thought of the lights of poetry and the shadows of heroic characters, and the echoes alike of the wailing multitude or the laughing race. Any history of Japanese art ideals is, therefore, almost an impossibility as long as the Western world remains so unaware of the varied environment and interrelated social phenomena into which that art is set like a jewel. The origin of the Yamato race is lost in the sea mists through which they reached Japan, thence to drive the aboriginal Ainus toward the north. History can, however, accord them the traits of fierceness in war, gentleness in the arts of peace, love of poetry, and reverence for womanhood. Their religion, called Shinto, worshiped the spirits of the dead gathered to the *kami* or gods on Takamagahara, an Olympus with the sun-goddess as its chief figure. Every family in Japan claims descent from some one or other god that accompanied the grandson of this sun-goddess in his descent upon Japan, there to establish the imperial dynasty that still rules it from ages unbroken. The varied beauty of Japan has promoted that marked individualism, that tender simplicity, that romantic purity, which differentiate Japanese art from the monotonous breadth of the Chinese and the overburdened richness of India. An innate love for cleanness, though sometimes detrimental to grandeur, gives an exquisite finish to decorative wares, that can be found nowhere else in Asia. The shrines of Ise and Idzumo are beautiful in their

undorned proportions. The dolmens held stone and terra-cotta coffins, sometimes covered with designs of considerable merit, and containing implements of worship and decoration, which display highly finished work in bronze, iron, and stone. Though foreign influence was soon felt, the original spirit of this primitive art has never been allowed to die; and there has always been abundant energy for the acceptance and reapplication of the influence received, however massive that might be. The first wave of continental influence that reached Japan came from the Chinese culture of the Hang dynasty (202 B. C. to 220 A. D.) and the Six Dynasties (268-618 A. D.). This Hang art was outcome of a primeval Shu art, and its ruling idea was Confucian, being the epitome of the great patriarchal system of a peaceful, agricultural people. This idea ignored alike the fancies of India and the dreams of Palestine, to devote itself to man; and it must always hold great minds by the spell of its broad generalizations and of its compassion for the commonalty. The supreme canon of life was the self-sacrifice of the individual to the community; and art was prized for its service to the moral needs of society. Shu bronze vases, although following a different convention, are more than equal in purity of form to the Greek. Indeed, these together constitute, like the calm and delicate jade compared with the flashing individualistic diamond, the antithesis of ideals, the two poles, of the decorative impulse in East and West. The pictorial style of the Hangs is irrecoverable, and even for specimens of their crafts we must turn to the dolmens, the Shintoist treasures, and the imperial collection of Japan. The vast bulk of Chinese and Korean immigrants to Japan were artists and artisans who worked in the Hang style, as their mirrors, horse-trappings, sword-ornaments, and armor in bronze and gold will testify. Yet the Confucian ideal, with its symmetry born of dualism, and its repose, the result of the instinctive subordination of the part to the whole, was necessarily restrictive of the freedom of art. Enchained to the service of ethics, art naturally became industrial. Indeed, the Chinese mind must always have tended toward the decorative, had not the Taoist insight contributed its playful individualism, and had not Buddhism come later with its demand for the expression of commanding ideals.

China could never have accepted this Indian idealism (Buddhism) had not Laoism and Taoism prepared its way. These two last-named systems sprang up among the southern Chinese on the swamipy and forested banks of the great Yangtse River, who remained barbarian as late as the Tang dynasty. These southerners found art expression in forms widely divergent from those of their northern countrymen. Their poetry abounds in admiration for rivers, clouds, and lake mists, in the love of freedom, and in the assertion of self. The last trait finds varied

expression in the *Tao-te King* written by Laotse, the great contemporary and rival of Kongtse (Confucius). Laotse's successor, Soshi, wrote with fine imagery in strong contrast to the prosy maxims of Kongtse. "The wind, nature's flute, sweeping across trees and waters, sings many melodies. Even so, the Tao, the great Mood, expresses itself through different minds and ages, and yet remains ever itself." This individualism shook Confucian socialism to its very foundations, so that Mengtse, the next greatest Confucian after Kongtse, devoted his life to fighting Laoism. Yet Yangtse poets continued to seek expression of their souls through nature, and to extol freedom as an essential. Pictorial art is sufficiently advanced by the fifth century A. D. to afford basis for the theories of Shakuku as to canons of art. He gives first place to a life-movement of the spirit through the rhythm of things. His second canon is called the law of bones and brush work, and it requires that the creative spirit show itself first in a bony system, then in lines like arteries, and finally clothe these with the skin of color. The third canon directs the artist to nature. No works of this period are extant, but we know that artists tried landscape, and that they produced the mighty conception of the dragon, emblem of change, born of cloud and mist. This independent system was too difficult for the masses, though Taoism tried to support its magic and witchcraft by doing honor to Laotse, the "old philosopher." Emperors dispatched expeditions to search for the elixir of life in the Eastern seas, and these, afraid to return empty-handed, are believed to have settled in Japan, where whole families claim descent from them.

The marvelous power for growth and adaptation inherent in Buddhism has led to numerous schools equally in India, China, and Japan, each school with many subdivisions. But whether interpreted according to the northern or the southern group of schools, Buddhism was essentially two things: a message of freedom to the soul, and a message of equality and brotherhood to all. It was the second element that distinguished the Buddha from all previous developers of Vedic thought, and enabled his teaching to win converts in communistic China. By thus universalizing Indian Idealism, Buddha became the ocean in which the Ganges and the Hoang-Ho mingle their waters. The art of early Buddhism was a natural growth from that of the epic age preceding it; for it is idle to deny the existence of pre-Buddhistic Indian art and to ascribe its sudden birth to the influence of the Greeks, as European archaeologists are wont to do. Free forms and a wide range of subjects appear in the rock temples of Orissa, and the sculptures of Sanchi and Amaravati. Later on, after the fourth century A. D., we find the wall paintings on the Ajanta caves and the sculptures in those at Ellora, now the few remaining specimens of a great Indian art, which doubtless, thanks to innumerable travelers, gave its inspiration to the Tang art of China.

The first Buddhistic period in Japan is called the Asuka period, because the empire's capital was located in the province of that name, and it lasted from 550 to 700 A. D. This faith reached Japan via Korea and China from Kashmir, where in the first century A. D. Kanishka's empire formed a link of communication between China and India. In 67 A. D. two Indian Buddhist monks with images reached China and thus introduced the northern school with its cult of Amida. The accompanying art was transformed to Chinese types. Thus, the temples were improvised from Chinese palaces, the storied stupa (relic shrine) passed, under conditions of wooden structure, into the pagoda, and sacred images assumed a Chinese aspect. The rock-cut images in the cave temples at Riumonsan in China date in part from this Tang dynasty. In 552 A. D. the Korean king, Meirei, sent ambassadors with Buddhist scriptures, a statue, hangings, and canopies, to the Japanese court, where the new faith soon won favor. Horiuji temple near Nara, Japan, remains rich in art specimens from this early period. The Sakya Trinity, cast by Tori 600 A. D., and the Yakushi Trinity of 625 A. D., each, including the halo, about seven feet high, show the same Hang type as the statues of Riumonsan noticed above. Two wooden Kwannons of the same type have disproportionate hands and feet, and rigidly calm features, yet manifest that purity and refinement that only religious feeling can produce. But contemporary Japanese work shows softer outlines and better proportions, as in the Kwannon of Chiuguji, though the Hang type is still preserved.

The Nara period of Japan ranged through the eighth century, and witnessed a change from the abstract universalism of the Amida system toward a recognition of the cosmos as its supreme revelation. This degenerated later into a sordid symbolism, but for a time spirit was seeking joyous union with matter, and Buddhist art assumes that aspect of calm proper to so balanced a conception. These new Indian views were carried to China by thousands of Indian monks, some of whom also reached Japan. In attempting to visualize this vast universe resting upon the Buddha, sculpture assumed colossal size. The Roshana Buddha (Buddha of Law) at Riumonsan in China towers sixty feet high, while the Roshana Buddha at Nara in Japan is the largest statue of cast bronze in the world. There also are the fine Amida Trinity and Yakushi Trinity also in bronze. A colossal Kwannon bears a silver Amida on its head. The wall paintings on Horiuji show improvement upon that of the Ajanta Caves; while the Imperial Treasury, also at Nara, contains the personal belongings of an emperor and empress of this eighth century, besides glass and enamels suggestive of Indian or Persian origin, and many specimens of Tang workmanship, making in all a miniature Pompeii, only without its catastrophic ashes.

The Heian period of Japan occupied the ninth century with its fusion of mind and matter, centering, however, in the material; for the symbol is regarded as realization, the common act as beatitude, and the world itself as the ideal one. This tendency led in India to Tantrikism and phallicism, oftentimes with base results, but making the living poetry of the home and of experience. In Japan the Shingon sect made the word, or the pronouncing of sacred charms, which they considered as lying on the borderland between mind and body, the chief way of attaining salvation. Every object, whether mean or noble, was now held worthy, since the whole of life was an embodiment of godhead. The untrained masses construed this subtle system into mere magic, and Buddhism itself acquired its great number of deities, alien to the faith, but engendered by the new teaching that they were simply manifestations of supreme, original divinity. Artistic works of the period are full of intense fervor, arising from this sense of nearness to the gods. Fine specimens of the period's sculpture are the Yakushi (Healer) Buddha extant in Kyoto, and a Kwannon at Toganji in Omi province. Of painting, the Twelve Devas by the great Kukai is still preserved. Heian art is strong and vital, because concrete and assured; but it is not free, since it lacks the spontaneity and detachment of idealism.

The Fujiwara period in Japan extended from 900 to 1200 A. D., and begins a truly national culture, now that the Indian ideals have been thoroughly apprehended. Besides the works of Japanese scholars in Chinese style, there now appear books written by women in the vernacular, and even men imitated their style. The court aristocracy found its occupation in art and poetry, and abandoned state duties to inferiors. The Buddhist sect of Jodo approximates this eternal feminine in its doctrine that prayer to the merciful Amida saves the soul, and soon a wave of religious emotion passed over Japan comparable to that which followed the great Vaishnava teachers in India, about the same time. This Jodo sect pleaded that, while strong natures could still seek salvation by self-conquest, the masses needed "an easier path," such as prayer to Amida, which would carry the soul to Jodo or the Pure Land. Images of this period show a new softened type, and painting introduces gold to represent the regions of Amida. Genshin has left a typical picture of Amida and Angels, while Jocho produced a glorious image of Amida alone.

The Kamakura period, 1200-1400 A. D., witnessed full development of the notion of feudal rights and individual consciousness, differing from European feudalism in its silence as to love for women and in its excess of devotion to the chieftain. The knight approximated the monk in his desire "to know the sadness of things," to suffer for others. This knightly or samurai class had adopted the teaching of a new Buddhist sect, the Zen, that salvation was to be sought in self-control. The art

of the period lacks the idealization of Nara and the delicacy of Fujiwara, but returns to a vigorous use of line. Portrait statues now claim first place, while painters delight in depicting motion, especially that of battle scenes.

The Ashikaga period, 1400-1600 A. D., was so named after the ruling family of shoguns. That progressive conquest of spirit over matter, whose stages European scholars have named the symbolic, the classic, and the romantic or individual, has passed through the same stages in the East. Japanese romanticism begins in this Ashikaga period. The expression of the spirit is the highest effort in art, and this spirit is not ascetic or traditional, but simply the essence or life of the thing itself. Beauty is this essence, and the artist could therefore express himself by means of it, which expression the Ashikaga artist made with directness and unity and an even too exclusive devotion to landscapes, birds, and flowers. This Ashikaga ideal owes its origin to the Zen sect of Buddhism. Zenism (the Indian *dhyana*, meaning "meditation") considered words an incumbrance to thought; and images, forms, and rituals only obstacles to the soul. It therefore disparaged the studied language of the Chinese literati, and stated its own doctrines in broken sentences and powerful metaphor. The human soul could attain Buddhhood by freeing itself from all so-called knowledge. Freedom, once attained, left men to revel in the beauties of the universe, in the green willows, the crimson flowers, and in music. The pain in life is merely incidental, and should not hinder man's serenity. The Ashikaga artists absorbed these ideas, and indeed were either Zen monks or lived almost like them. They discarded delicate curves and seductive colors for simple ink sketches in a few bold lines, in order to make expression as simple and direct as possible. "Composition is like the creation of the world, holding in itself the constructive laws that give it life." A galaxy of artists fills this period, which is unparalleled by any other. The masters are two: Sesshu, noted for his directness, self-control, security, and calm; and Sesson, distinguished for the co-ordinate Zen trait, freedom, ease, and playfulness. Shiubun paved the way for these masters, and Jasoku is a close rival on account of his vigorous stroke and compact composition. Hosts of others follow in the wake of these: Noami, Gajami, Soami, Sotan, Keishoki, Masanobu, and Motonobu. Indeed, life and art, as influenced by Zen teachings, wrought changes in Japanese habits which have become second nature. The Ashikaga aristocracy worked from luxury to simplicity and refinement. Thus, their thatched cottages had exquisite proportions, and were provided with art-craft utensils. Implements were made plain outside, glorious within; the costliest stuffs were reserved for undergarments; and the tearoom was decorated with a single picture or vase. Similarly the No dance treated historical subjects, interpreted through

Buddhist ideas, with great suggestiveness through sounds imitative of nature as well as through discourse.

The Toyotomi and early Tokugawa period was introduced by the overthrow of the effete Ashikaga shoguns at the hands of hardy chieftains, to whose uncultured minds the severe refinement of the Ashikagas was unintelligible, and was therefore soon displaced by gorgeousness and color, for which models were seen in the Ming style of China. But Tokugawa Iyeyasu strove to return to the Ashikaga ideal in both manners and art. His court painters—Tannyu, Naonoby, Yasunobu, and Tsunenobu—aimed to imitate the purity of Sesshu, but failed to touch his real significance. The architecture of the period blazed with color decorations, as in the mausoleums of Nikko and Shiba, and the palaces at Nijo Castle and Nishi Hōganji Temple in Kyoto. Freed from half a century of civil warfare, the people gave themselves to revelry, and art became greatly decorative though not spiritual. The school of Sotatsu and Korin foreshadows modern impressionism. Its pioneers, Koyetsu and Koho, handled color more as mass than as line, as former artists had done, and produced the broadest effects with a simple wash.

The later Tokugawa period, 1700-1850, saw the vital spark crushed out of art, and indeed all life, by the consolidation and discipline of the Tokugawa shoguns. Daily routine was imposed upon high and low alike, and society was thus cast in a single mold. The Kano family were court painters and instructors in the government art-academies, each of which had its hereditary lord. Students of these Tokyo academies returned to the provinces to paint as they had been taught, in a routine, departure from which meant ostracism. The Tosa family of painters was also re-established, but only imitated its ancestors. Shut off from this aristocratic art of the samurai, the common people supported an art expressive of the gay life of the actor and the courtesan. This Ukiyoe or Popular school attained skill in color and drawing, but lacked that idealism which is the basis of Japanese art. "Those charmingly colored woodcuts, full of vigor and versatility, made by Utamaro, Shunman, Kionobu, Harunobu, Kionaga, Toyokuni, and Hokusai, stand apart from the main line of development of Japanese art, whose evolution has been continuous ever since the Nara period. The inros, the netsukis, the sword guards, and the delightful lacquer articles of the period, were playthings, and as such no embodiment of national fervor. Great art is that before which we long to die. But the art of the late Tokugawa period only allowed a man to dwell in the delights of fancy. It is because the prettiness of the works of this period first came to notice, instead of the grandeur of the masterpieces hidden in the daimyo's collections and the temple treasures, that Japanese art is not yet seriously considered in the West." Kyoto enjoyed a freer air, owing to the presence there of

the imperial court. It experienced two influences: one from the later Ming of China, and another from European realism, which reached Kyoto through the Chinese and the Dutch. Okio founded the Maruyama school by combining his early Kano training with the foreign methods into a style of his own, with keen observation of nature, delicacy, softness, and exquisite gradation of effects. Goshun, his rival, founded the Shijo school. Ganku, another realist, founded the Riashi school. These three streams constitute the modern Kyoto school of realism. They fail of the truly national element, just as the Popular school did.

The Meiji period runs from 1850 to the present day, and owed its inception to three causes: (1) historic studies, on the model of the Ming scholars, which revived the nationalistic spirit; (2) the danger of Western encroachments, and (3) the resentment of certain princes in the South, who had been reduced almost to vassalage by the Tokugawas. So the Meiji restoration glows with patriotism. "Not only to return to our own past ideals, but also to feel and revivify the dormant life of the old Asiatic unity becomes our mission. The sad problems of Western society turn us to seek a higher solution in Indian religion and Chinese ethics." Meiji art likewise turned to the pre-Tokugawa schools, and effected a Kamakura revival in historical painting. A Bijitsu Kyo-Kai, or Art Association, opened annual exhibitions of old masterpieces. The Government School of Art unfortunately followed the hard classicism of Europe. A third party tried to reconstruct national art on a new basis by combining its ancient ideals and methods with the most sympathetic of the European. This movement resulted in the establishment of a Government Art School at Ueno in Tokyo, but since 1897 is best represented by the Nippon Bijitsuin at Yanaka, Tokyo. "According to this school, freedom is the greatest privilege of an artist, but freedom always in the sense of evolutionary self-development. Art is neither the ideal nor the real. Imitation, whether of nature, of the old masters, or above all of self, is suicidal to the realization of individuality, which rejoices always to play an original part, be it of tragedy or comedy, in the grand drama of life, of man, and of nature. . . . Technique is thus but the weapon of the artistic warfare; scientific knowledge of anatomy and perspective, the commissariat that sustains the army. These Japanese art may safely accept from the West, without detracting from its own nature. Ideals, in turn, are the modes in which the artistic mind moves, a plan of campaign which the nature of the country imposes on war. Within and behind them lies always the sovereign-general, immovable and self-contained, nodding peace or destruction from his brow." Kano Hogai lately deceased, Hashimoto Gaho who is the chief living master, and numerous followers, are noted both for versatility of technique and for enlarged notions of the subject-matter of art. Sculpture and other arts

follow closely on this road. "The wonderful glaze of Kozan is not only reviving the lost secrets of early Chinese keramics, but creating new Korin-like dreams in color." Laquer, embroidery, tapestry, cloisonné, and metal-work are all breathing new life.

The vista for Asia is reassuring. Its simple life need fear no shaming in contrast with that of Europe; and its task today is to protect and restore Asiatic modes. Life lies ever in the return to self. This return remade Japan, and must remake Asia. But even Japan cannot, in the tangled skein of the Meiji period, find that single thread which will give her the clue to her own future, for the great mass of Western thought perplexes us. It will end in victory from within or a mighty death without.