

# ***Study on the Harmony of Japanese Culture from the Perspective of the Development of Chinese Traditional Festivals in Japan——Take Obon and Tanabata as examples***

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**Abstract:** Japanese culture has always been concerned by people from different countries and fields with its distinctive characteristics and vitality. Japanese culture has a strong compatibility and creativity. This article takes the development of Chinese traditional festivals such as Tanabata and Obon as examples in Japan. Through research, it is found that Japanese culture is compatible and creative, that is, the initiative and selectivity of Japanese culture in absorbing foreign cultures. And subjectivity, the forms and levels of innovation are diverse, and the content keeps pace with the times and adapts to local conditions. With these points as the core, Japanese culture has achieved a better absorption of foreign cultures, reflecting the strong vitality of Japanese culture.

## **I. Introduction**

Japan has always been well-known for its ability to absorb foreign cultures. China and Japan are separated by a narrow strip of water as neighboring countries, and they have very similar geographical and climatic conditions. In addition, the two countries have been able to communicate with each other since ancient times. Japanese culture often shows the elements of Chinese culture, but it is not all consistent. Japanese culture has its distinctive national characteristics. The ability of Japanese culture to absorb and create foreign cultures is very valuable. This article aims to discover and summarize the characteristics of Japanese culture's absorption and creation of foreign cultures through the development of traditional Chinese festivals in Japan, and to think about the coexistence and symbiosis of foreign and local cultures from a new dimension.

## **2. Conditions for the Development of Traditional Chinese Festivals in Japan**

### **2.1 Natural Factors Such as Geographical Location and Climate**

Japan's land area is small, and Japan's arable land area accounts for only 11% of Japan's land area. Resources are extremely scarce. However, not only that, because Japan is in the Pacific Rim Volcanic Seismic Belt, earthquakes are also very frequent. Not only that, natural disasters are not uncommon because of the excessive mountains and hills, surrounded by the sea and other factors. It

can be said that Japan's "congenital conditions" are too bad. It is precisely such harsh conditions that prompted Japan to learn from China, the closest and most powerful ancient country at the time, in order to achieve the development and survival of the nation.

Japan has the motivation and need to learn from abroad, so why did Japan choose China, and finally succeeded in "learning" from China. It can be seen that Chinese culture is not only powerful and vital, but also suitable for planting on Japanese soil. From the latitude point of view, Japan and most of China are above the same latitude, and the climate conditions are similar to those of China. Not only the climate, but Japan's ground environment and sunshine conditions for agricultural production are relatively consistent with ancient China. Our ancestors divided the year into 24 solar terms on this basis. Because Japan is similar to China in terms of geographical conditions, the lunar calendar can also be accepted and used by Japan, and China gave birth to various solar terms based on the characteristics of the 24 solar terms. Traditional festivals, after the introduction of the lunar calendar in Japan, such as New Year's Day, Mid-Autumn Festival and other traditional festivals naturally have grown up in Japan. After these traditional festivals were introduced to Japan through the "preachers", as early as the seventh and eighth centuries, many traditional Chinese festivals had spread to all parts of Japan.

## 2.2 Cultural Exchanges and Cultural Dissemination Methods between the Two Countries

According to historical records, the earliest period of large-scale exchanges between Japan and China can be traced back to 221 BC, when the Qin era destroyed the six countries and a large number of immigrants from China came to Japan, bringing advanced agricultural civilization to Japan at that time. , So that the rapid development of Japan at that time, and then entered the Yayoi era. At that time, the cultural exchange between the two places was mainly through immigration. From the Han Dynasty to the Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties, China and Japan had official or non-governmental exchanges. This has been recorded extensively in historical materials such as "The Book of the Later Han: The Story of Dongyi" and Japanese works of the same period.

In 592 AD, Japan's Emperor Tuigu came to the throne and sent overseas students and envoys to study in China as a tribute. Emperor Tuigu strengthened the concentration of central political power and paved the way for the later use of a Chinese-style bureaucracy. In 630, Emperor Shu Ming of Japan sent the first envoy to Tang Dynasty. In 645, Emperor Kotoku came to the throne to comprehensively study the feudal bureaucracy of the Tang Dynasty and carry out major reforms. During this period, the exchanges between China and Japan were mainly envoys sent to the Tang Dynasty, overseas students and monks studying abroad. This period was a climax of cultural exchanges in the history of China and Japan.

Then came the Song and Yuan dynasties, that is, from the 10th century to the 14th century AD. During this period, China and Japan had no official ties, but non-governmental exchanges developed. During this period, two-way trade was mainly carried out through navigation in the East China Sea. The medium of cultural dissemination was mainly embodied in civil trade and monks, not just material. During this period, various Chinese customs, culture, literature, painting and calligraphy and other spiritual civilizations were also frequently introduced to Japan.

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, that is, the late Muromachi period, the Azuchi-Momoyama period and the Edo period in Japan, the exchanges between Japan and China paid more attention to spiritual and cultural exchanges than material exchanges. Non-governmental exchanges became more and more prosperous. During this period, Chinese culture was imported into Japan. There are many kinds of media.

### 3. Related Changes after the Introduction of Obon to Japan

During the period from 606 to 733, the Obon Society in Japan basically adopted the same practice as China. It was promoted by the upper echelon and the imperial court led the Obon Society in the temple to provide for the monks. At that time, only the court and nobles could participate in the Obon.

Since 1185, Japan has entered the Kamakura era. During this period, the ruling class in Japan has quietly changed from the aristocratic class to the samurai class. During this period, the various customs and cultures of the aristocratic society quietly moved down. Buddhism, as a religious belief, has not only spread among the aristocratic class but also has a place in the folk warrior class. During this period, the offerings to the ancestors began to gradually ban the offerings to the monks, and the "home basin" was born during this period.

During the Muromachi period, wars continued, and Japanese temples gradually declined, and the Obon Society was no longer held. The use of "home basins" was expanded and spread. In the 28th year of Yingyong, countless people died of starvation due to turmoil and natural disasters. This was the birth of the evil spirit society. Others include lanterns, lantern festivals, and pots. The old custom is to burn wood and bamboo leaves on New Year's Eve. Sacrifice to ancestors and gods is called Shengpen, also known as Xiepen. And many more. During this period, the Japanese Obon festival form gradually took on a certain scale and form.

Today, Japan's Obon Festival has become Japan's second largest festival. The Obon Festival that was introduced to Japan has gradually lost its original Buddhist element. According to the belief in ancestors in Japan To merge and change. The theme of Obon in Japan has become a sacrifice to ancestors. Its customs and activities are even more diverse. A series of activities are centered on the three aspects of welcoming ancestors back home, enshrining ancestors, and sending ancestors away.

Compared with the gradual decline of the Obon Festival in China, the Obon Festival in Japan is still very prosperous. The author believes that the reason is that although China is the birthplace of Obon, various rituals and festivals are too conservative in the process of inheritance. In the process of development of Obon in Japan, new ones are constantly being created. The content introduces various ways of celebrating festivals, and various commercial activities are emerging one after another. The country also attaches great importance to the Obon Festival, declaring it as the second largest festival in Japan. These have laid a broad public foundation for the inheritance of Obon in Japan, and are also the secret of the enduring of Obon in Japan.

### 4. The Related Evolution of Tanabata after Its Introduction into Japan

In Japan, the legend of Tanabata can be traced back to the Hakuho era (645-710) in Japan. On July 7th of the Japanese lunar calendar, there was a record of the emperor holding a banquet at the court. Some scholars therefore believe that the introduction of the Chinese Tanabata legend to Japan may have been introduced with the textile technology and textile talents of Wudi in China before the seventh century. After that, in the eighth century, the Japanese court began to chant the Qixi Festival as an elegant, and there was a wave of begging for clever activities.

It was regarded as a fashion in the Japanese court in the Nara period. There are a lot of poems centered on the legend of Tanabata in the "Autumn Songs" of the "Manyha Collection" Vol. 10, which was compiled during the Nara period. After that, as the culture of the Tang Dynasty spread until the death of Emperor Heicheng, successive emperors would hold a poetry meeting in the palace on July 7th, and let the female officials in the palace display silk weaving boutiques as a begging activity for Qixi Festival. Since this day became a national memorial day, the Qixi Poetry Club ceased to exist. The Qixi Festival is no longer an official court "festival" but it is circulated as "begging for cleverness" in the hands of the nobles. It is called the "weaver girl festival". On this

day, like women in China, Japanese women wear tangram needles as tribute. One is enshrined in the courtyard, in order to make things more beautiful.

During the Muromachi period, due to the turmoil, the Tanabata culture further declined and spread widely among the samurai class. During this period, various entertainment activities were derived from samurai and monks on Tanabata. It was not until the Edo period that the Tanabata Festival was officially designated as one of the "Five Offerings Festival" by the Shogunate as an official official festival, and Qixi Festival spread to the whole people.

The legend of the Cowherd and the Girl Weaver also experienced localization after it was introduced to Japan. The image of the Weaver Girl as a goddess has not changed. The cowherd is different according to the customs and legends of various places, including fishermen and farmers. Although the legend itself is similar but not the same.

## 5. The Compatibility and Creativity of Japanese Culture

### 5.1 From Passive to Active

No cultural progress can be achieved overnight. It is through the long-term development of Japanese culture that we can see its inherent compatibility and creativity. In the beginning, whether it was the emperor offering monks, organizing the Bon festival, or holding a grand event in the Tang Palace on the Qixi Festival of Qiqiao, after it was introduced to Japan, the form of the original Chinese festival has not changed much, and it is almost intact. Copy. And at first, the ruler was the core to imitate at the top. The root of the ruler's doing this is that he saw the strength of Chinese culture and wanted to quickly grow himself through the same method. Taking the initiative is the prerequisite for Japanese culture to show compatibility and creativity.

### 5.2 Selectivity and subjectivity

When Japanese culture absorbs and integrates foreign culture and creates its own new culture, it does not choose to copy it entirely, but to absorb it selectively. On the basis of absorption, it makes adjustments according to its own situation and makes new creations to maintain The subjectivity of one's own culture. Obon Festival in China, whether it is the Mulian Savior of Buddhism or the Zhongyuan Ghost Festival of Taoism, its intrinsic essence reflects the Chinese "filial piety" thought. After it was introduced to Japan, both China and Japan advocated souls. According to the doctrine, Japan quickly accepted the fusion of Obon based on its own belief in "the god of the clan", and developed a unique custom of welcoming, paying homage to, and sending away ancestors based on its own ancestral beliefs. It is very different from what was originally introduced in China. The same is true for Tanabata. The Japanese found that the legend of Tanabata has a high similarity with their own unique heritage "Tanjijin Girl", so they used this as a medium to choose the Tanabata culture to accept the integration, and derived from the "Tanjijin The "women" mainly beg for rain, bathe by the water, and float the decorative bamboo along the water, etc., which are water-based customs.

## 6. Conclusion

Japan selectively absorbs and integrates traditional Chinese festivals and gives them new cultural connotations, and the way of celebrating festivals varies greatly depending on the class, enriching the content and form of the festival.

Through researching Japanese culture, I think the most important thing that cannot be ignored is the compatibility and creativity of Japanese culture. The lack of resources and the harsh living

environment make the Japanese people rush to advanced foreign cultures, and through selection, advanced foreign cultures have a widely accepted basis. Traditional Chinese festivals, in the form of legends, festivals and customs, have been well localized by Japan in various classes and ages. By comparing the content and form of the Tanabata Festival and the Tanabata Festival in China and Japan, it is not difficult to see that the development of the Bon Festival and Tanabata Festival in Japan has been very different from what it was when it was introduced. Integration and innovation are introduced. In traditional festivals, Japanese culture has shown its distinctive subjectivity. The author believes that on the basis of maintaining its own subjectivity, Japanese culture absorbs foreign cultures and keeps advancing with the times is the source of Japanese culture's vitality and an important manifestation of its compatibility and creativity.

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