

Principles of Emergence of Urban Literature of the 17th Century in Japanese Literature

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Abstract

The urban culture of the 17th century has come a long way. A large part of all works of art began to be intended for a new audience - city dwellers. The works were dedicated to the image of their life, interests, worries, and desires. The life of the city, the people who live in it have become the subject of art. This article talks about the factors that caused the creation of urban literature.

Keywords: public literacy, Genroku period, humanism, ukiyo-e pictures, ukiyo-zoshi literature.

The 17th century was a complex period in the life of Japan, and it was one of the important stages in the transition from the Middle Ages to the new era. As in other countries of the Far East, in Japan, this period is explained by a number of new events in social and cultural life, significant changes observed in the field of literature.

After the establishment of a strong central government at the beginning of the 17th century, the period of internal struggles for power in the Middle Ages, which had lasted for more than a hundred years, ended in Japan. After peace was established in the country, urban civilization began to develop rapidly in Japan. City residents - craftsmen and merchants came to the social life area.

According to feudal laws, this stratum, which is at the bottom of the stratification ladder, has now started to play a significant role in the life of the country.

By the 17th century, Japanese culture had become significantly democratized. For the first time in the country's history, a broad layer of urban residents was also allowed to enter the sphere of culture and education.

The increase in public literacy has led to an increase in the need for books. Until this time, book printing was in the hands of Buddhists for several centuries. Publishing books required a lot of work and money, so only large synagogues could do it. This, of course, had a great influence on the content of published literature, mainly Buddhist texts and commentaries on them were published. Starting from the 14th century, book printing moved away from the monopoly of the temples and gradually passed into the hands of the nobles. In the 14th and 16th centuries, the demand for books increased to such an extent that hundreds of copies had to be printed in xylographic method. At the end of the 16th century, the xylographic method was replaced by movable type, and book printing increased several times.¹

The most developed period of urban culture of the 17th century corresponds to the Genroku period (1688-1704, or the last quarter of the 17th century - the first quarter of the 18th century). In this bright and unrepeatable period, Japan's great talents created by inspiring each other. These

¹B.S. Hryvnina. The Begining of book printing in Japan. Article. China. Japan. History and philology. M., 1961. 316,320 p.

were: writer Ihara Saikaku, playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon, poet Matsuo Basho, master of wood engraving Hishikawa Moronobu, painter Ogata Korin, sculptor Enku.

There is a tradition of viewing the Genroku period as the "Japanese Renaissance". N. I. Konrad calls the 17-18 centuries "the period of Japanese enlightenment".² V. Markova and I. Lyvova believe that "Japanese culture during the Genroku period combined elements of the late Renaissance and the Enlightenment period."³

T. P. Grigoryeva, talking about Genroku's era, evaluates it as "Renaissance stopped halfway". According to her, the objective conditions paved the way for the development of the culture of the representatives of the third layer and created an opportunity for the Renaissance to flourish in Japan, but this opportunity did not become a reality. It was enough to create the ground for this: cities developed, representatives of the third layer woke up, and the level of education of the nation increased. But other necessary elements were missing for a full-fledged Renaissance. These were forms of government that allowed for personal freedom and a cultural movement similar to Renaissance humanism.⁴

A number of factors led to the gradual development of literature intended for the middle class. First of all, because the literature of the nobility was very limited, it did not reach the representatives of the lower class, which created a need for the working class to create their own literature. Of course, it is a pity that the literature of the nobles, who reached the peak of revolution in the Heian period and donated priceless works to the treasury of world literature, is gradually fading away, but this very situation created the ground for the creation of new ideas and literary forms.

Although the writers of the Genroku period were talented and skilled masters of their work, they were not educated according to the principles of the nobility and did not distinguish themselves from their readers by belonging to a separate group. One of the important aspects is that although the artists of this period have different views, there is one thing in common in their work. This is the desire to depict new feelings and thoughts in creativity.

Indeed, the urban culture of the 17th century has come a long way. A large part of all works of art was intended for a new audience - city dwellers. The works were dedicated to the image of their life, interests, worries, and desires. The life of the city, the people who live in it and are busy with their worries have become the subject of art.

When we study the literary environment of the XVII century city, and especially the literature that flourished during the Genroku period, it is necessary to pay special attention to the economy of that time.

The main and important sign of the economic life of this period is the strengthening of the middle class, mainly the merchant class. Until this period, Japan had a feudal political and social structure.

Feudal princes-daimyos and their vassals-samurai formed a military stratum with great privileges and ruled the state. During the 17th century, a new stratum of merchants and traders appeared. This layer, concentrated mainly in Nara, Kyoto and Osaka, was called kamigata. They were business-minded, thrifty, and lucky, and soon became a great power. After all, feudal officials were not interested in trade, and had no training in this field.

Here we quote the notes of George Senson. "The culture of the townspeople was a flourishing bourgeois culture, and it was mainly entertainment-oriented. The art created by them was created around the direction known as "ukiyo-e" in the colloquial language of that time, i.e. "paintings of fleeting life".

² H.I. Conrad. "History of modern Japanese literature", M., 1961, 340,344,349 p.

³ Markova V., Lvova I. Monzaemon Chikamatsu. Drama. M., 1963, 24 p

⁴ T. P. Grigorieva. Revival Stopped Halfway (About the Genroku Period in Japan)) Article. Published in Problems of periodization of the history of the literatures of the peoples of the East - M.: Nauka, 1968, 182 p

It was a world of passing whims, theaters, taverns, theaters, and its regular customers were actors, dancers, singers, storytellers and entertainers, sons of rich merchants, courtesans, traveling merchants, samurai".⁵

Urban literature began to break the chain of established traditions. At first, in the period when the influence of the samurai class increased, the fate of an ordinary urban man, his thoughts, and his spiritual world were considered unimportant and unworthy to be depicted as an object of an artistic work. Now, the representatives of the third class, which is growing stronger, began to demand attention from literature. It is not the victories and defeats of the samurai battles that are told in the military-feudal epics of the past centuries, but the fortunes and crises in trade affairs; The characters of the No theater are not abstract feelings, but the fate and feelings of an ordinary urban person have become the plot of a work of art.

Writers of the Genroku period choose the method "free from moral issues" in order to reveal the period of changes, they are somewhat opposed to the didactic education characteristic of Kanazoshi's works. This new world view was different from the accepted views.

As we noted above, Japanese literature underwent unique changes during the 17th century. Buds of a new approach to the object of the image began to appear among the traditional artistic styles existing in prose narration. Now, the attention of creators is attracted not only by the heroism of the heroes, but also by the closed, "unofficial" aspects of their lives.

Noticeable changes also occurred in the poetics of two other genres developed in that period - novella about miracles and love stories. Writers who create shocking events began to pay more attention to the images of the real everyday life of the cities of the 17th century. Sometimes even the smallest details of everyday life began to occupy more space than the description of miraculous events.

Due to the policy established by the Tokugawa dynasty, the influence of cultural exchanges with countries that had stepped on the path of bourgeois development much earlier than Japan and advanced was not felt in Japanese literature. Even in such conditions, the role of people who have realized that it is necessary to change the relations between people by looking at the world with new eyes is more valuable and noteworthy. Philosophers Arai Hakuseki and Ando Shoeki, playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon, poet Matsuo Basho, and of course writer Ihara Saikaku should be mentioned among such people.

In conclusion, it should be said that by the 17th century, a great shift and change took place in Japanese literature. The literature of this period is characterized by placing ordinary urban people in the center of the work. Their lifestyle, feelings and experiences, and their worries became the object of an artistic work.

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⁵ Sansom G. B. Japan: short cultural history. L., 1932. p 466-467