HIST 1421-01 Greek and Roman Civilization

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**Part A: The Relationship between Religious Concepts and Art & Architecture in Japan**

Art and architecture in Japan have been deeply influenced by religious beliefs throughout its long history. Particularly, Shinto and Buddhism have been deeply rooted in Japanese culture and aesthetics, and their influence is clearly reflected in buildings and artworks. This paper will examine how Japan's religious beliefs have influenced its art and architecture, providing specific examples.

**Influence of Regional Religious Beliefs on the Nation's Art and Architecture**

In Japan, Shinto and Buddhism have been major sources of inspiration for art and architecture. Shinto emphasizes nature worship and ancestor worship, characterized by simple and harmonious designs with nature. On the other hand, Buddhism has produced magnificent temple architecture and intricate Buddhist sculptures.

Example of Shinto Architecture: Ise Jingu

Ise Jingu is a representative shrine in Japan and a central place of Shinto worship. This shrine adopts the "Shinmei-zukuri" architectural style, which is one of the oldest styles in Japan. It features a simple yet solemn beauty, using wood as the primary material and constructed without nails, reflecting the Shinto principle of harmony with nature.

Example of Buddhist Temple: Kiyomizu-dera in Kyoto

Kiyomizu-dera in Kyoto is one of the masterpieces of Japanese architecture influenced by Buddhism. This temple has luxurious decorations and a complex structure, visually expressing Buddhist teachings. The wide wooden stage known as Kiyomizu's stage is assembled without nails, demonstrating engineering marvels and serving as a symbol of reaching spiritual heights in Buddhism.

**Explanation of This Relationship**

Connection between Religion and Art & Architecture

Religious symbols and beliefs are often visually expressed in art and architecture, aiming to strengthen faith and enhance the sense of community. For example, the torii gates of shrines and the statues of Buddhas in temples act as symbols of faith, providing religious experiences to visitors.

Examples and Evidence

The "Shinmei-zukuri" style of Ise Jingu symbolizes the purity of Shinto, with the tradition of regular rebuilding known as "Shikinen Sengu" emphasizing concepts of continuity and renewal (Ono, 2005). From the stage of Kiyomizu-dera, visitors can overlook the natural beauty of the four seasons, highlighting the Buddhist teaching of harmony with nature (Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, 2010). These examples show how Japan's religious beliefs are concretely reflected in its architecture.

**Conclusion**

Japanese art and architecture have been deeply shaped by the two major religious beliefs, Shinto and Buddhism. The simplicity and nature worship of Shinto, and the magnificence and spiritual elevation of Buddhism, each provide unique beauty to Japanese buildings and artworks. These religious elements are not merely decorative or design aspects but form the core of Japanese culture and values, and their influence will continue in the future.

**Part B: The Relationship and Influence of Roman and Greek Philosophy**

In Unit 1, I explored Classical Greek Philosophy. This week's focus has been on Roman Philosophy and the prominent schools that fall under it. This part of the assignment will examine the relationship between Roman and Greek Philosophy, the main schools of Roman philosophy, and the personal relevance of one Roman philosophical idea.

**Relationship between Roman Philosophy and Greek Philosophy**

Influence and Differences

Roman philosophy is significantly influenced by Greek philosophy. The Romans admired Greek thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle, and they adopted and adapted many of their ideas. However, Roman philosophy also developed its unique aspects, emphasizing practicality and ethics in everyday life.

Examples and Evidence

For instance, the Stoic philosophy that became prominent in Rome was heavily influenced by Greek Stoicism but focused more on practical ethics and governance (Long, 2006). Roman philosophers like Seneca and Marcus Aurelius drew from Greek predecessors but tailored their teachings to fit Roman society and values (Gill, 2007).

**Main Schools of Roman Philosophy**

Stoicism

Stoicism, one of the most influential schools in Roman philosophy, emphasizes virtue, wisdom, and self-control as the path to a good life. It teaches that by accepting the natural order of things and focusing on what one can control, one can achieve inner peace and resilience against external hardships.

Epicureanism

Epicureanism, another major school, focuses on the pursuit of happiness through the avoidance of pain and the cultivation of simple pleasures. It argues that pleasure is the highest good, but true pleasure is attained through intellectual pursuits and moderation rather than indulgence.

Skepticism

Skepticism, the third main school, promotes doubt and questioning as essential components of philosophical inquiry. It encourages the suspension of judgment in the absence of sufficient evidence, fostering a mindset of open-mindedness and continuous learning.

**Personal Appeal of Roman Philosophy**

Chosen Idea and Reason

The Stoic idea of focusing on what one can control and accepting what one cannot control resonates deeply with me. This philosophy offers practical guidance for managing stress and maintaining emotional balance in daily life. By applying Stoic principles, I can cultivate resilience and a positive outlook, even in challenging situations.

Application in Daily Life

In my daily life, I can use Stoic practices such as negative visualization, where I imagine possible obstacles to prepare myself mentally. Additionally, by practicing mindfulness and reflecting on my reactions, I can better control my emotions and actions, aligning them with my values and goals.

**Conclusion**

Roman philosophy, while heavily influenced by Greek thought, developed its unique emphasis on practical ethics and personal conduct. The three main schools—Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Skepticism—each offer distinct approaches to achieving a good life. Among these, the Stoic focus on self-control and acceptance has particular relevance to modern life, providing valuable strategies for personal growth and resilience.

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References

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