Japan before 1333

I. General notes
   A. Japan before Buddhism
      1. The introduction of Buddhism to Japan in 552 changed the character of Japanese art
         and architecture.
      2. Art historians divide the history of art in Japan into pre-Buddhist and Buddhist era.

   B. Jomon and Yayoi Periods
      1. Japan’s earliest distinct culture was the Jomon. It emerged roughly 10,000 years
         before the Buddha’s birth.
      2. Jomon, which means cord markings, refers to the technique Japanese potters used to
         decorate earthenware vessels.
      3. The Jomon people were hunter-gatherers, but lived settled lives.
      4. Their villages consisted of pit dwellings (shallow round excavations with raised
         earthen rims and thatched roofs).
      5. Because they were a settled people, they were able to develop distinctive ceramic
         technology even before they developed agriculture.
      6. In addition to rope markings, Jomon pottery contained incised lines and applied coils
         of clay. They also featured quasi-figural motifs that jeopardized the functionality of
         some pieces.
C. Vessel from Miyanomae, Nagano Prefecture, Japan
D. Dotaku with incised figural motifs, from Kagawa Prefecture, Japan (based on Han Chinese bells, but were ceremonial objects, and not instruments. Features geometric decoration and the earliest Japanese images of people and animals).
E. Kofun Period
   1. This period is named Kofun after the enormous earthen burial mounds, or tumuli, that had begun to appear in the 3rd Century.
   2. Ko= old
   3. Fun= tomb
   4. The tumuli recall the earlier Jomon practice of placing the dead on sacred mountains.

F. Tomb of Emperor Nintoku, Sakai, Osaka Prefecture, Japan
   1. The largest Kofun tumulus, attributed to Emperor Nintoku, has a keyhole shape and three surrounding moats.
G. Haniwa warrior, from Gunma Prefecture, Japan
1. Cylindrical clay statue of warrior that served as a protective spiritual barrier between the living and the dead.
2. Hani= clay, Wa= circle
3. They Haniwa pieces would be of anything the particular artist wanted.
H. Shinto
   2. Did not come from the teachings of any individual founding figure or distinct leader.
   3. No formal scriptures exist.
   4. Developed in conjunction with the advent of agricultural progress.
   5. The system originally focused on the needs of their agrarian society and included rituals and rites surrounding planting and harvesting.
   6. Kami were the deities that villagers prayed to. It was believed that kami existed in mountains, waterfalls, trees, and other features of nature, and charismatic people.
   7. The places where kami dwelled were considered sacred.
   8. Each clan (a local group of people claiming a common ancestry) had its own protector kami.
   9. Families offered common prayers in the spring for successful planting and in the fall they prayed for good harvest.
   10. Physical cleanliness was as important as spiritual cleanliness. Visitors had to wash before entering a temple.

I. Asuka and Nara Periods
   1. Buddhist art practices followed Korean and Chinese practices closely during the Asuka and Nara periods. They followed so closely that Buddhist architecture has been used to reconstruct Chinese architecture that was lost on the mainland.
2. Tori Busshi (Buddha flanked by two bodhisattvas)
   a. Central figure in the triad is Shaka, the Indian/Chinese Sakyamuni, the historical Buddha.
   b. He is seated with his right hand raised in the abhaya mudra, or fear-not gesture.
   c. Behind him is a flaming mandorla, a lotus-petal shaped nimbus, which has images of other Buddhas in it.
   d. Busshi means maker of Buddhist images.
3. Yakushi triad
   a. Another image of the Buddha, but done more realistically.
   b. Anatomy is more realistic, as well as the drapery of the clothing.
4. Taizokai mandara (Womb World)
   a. The Womb World mandara (sacred diagram of the universe) is an image of the cosmic universe, composed of 12 zones, each representing one dimension of Buddha nature.
   b. Many of the figures hold lightning bolts, symbolizing the power of the mind to destroy human passion.
   c. Mandaras played a central role in Esoteric Buddhist rituals and meditation.
5. Portrait statue of the priest Shunjobo Chogen
The Seven Deities of Good Fortune and Chinese children are auspicious symbols of wealth and abundance. This screen illustrates, from right to left, three of the seven deities: Daikokuten, Hotei, and Ebisu. Another screen, originally paired with this one but now missing, must have included the remaining four deities: Bishamonten, Jurojin, Benzaiten, and Fukurokuju.

In this composition, Chinese children play under the kindly eye of the Deities of Good Fortune. They pull a carriage abundant with flowers, gallop on hobby horses, and engage in a game of tag. The happy-go-lucky spirit of this painting is intended to evoke joy and bliss.
Kyoyu and Sofu

Okumura Masanobu's straightforward treatment of the classical Chinese story of the legendary recluses Kyoyu and Sofu (Xu You and Chao Fu in Chinese) features the figures with an inscription. Feeling as if his ears are dirty upon hearing an invitation from the imperial court to take political power, Kyoyu washes out his ears in a waterfall. Sofu turns his ox away from the cascade, which has been contaminated by Kyoyu's washing. The *ishizuri-e* (literally, stone-rubbing picture) style imitates the "rubbing" technique, a traditional method for collecting inscriptions and images from stone stele. Masanobu, an artist, innovator, and publisher, was one of the most important figures in the entire course of the *ukiyo-e* tradition.
Kitagawa Utamaro, one of the most prolific artists of the genre of portrayal of beautiful women, was extremely interested in images of mother and child in daily life. This print belongs to a series entitled *Fuzoku Bijin Tokei* (Women's Daily Customs). To illustrate midnight, Utamaro has chosen a mother who sleepily emerges from her mosquito net to attend to her child, who rubs the sleep from his eyes. The personal, quotidian nature of the subject exemplifies the new interest in the individual that emerged during the Edo period.
The actor Otani Oniji II is captured here in the role of Yakko Edobe. A yakko is a manservant often used by samurai to perform violent deeds. Otani Oniji's leering face, shown in three-quarter view, bristling hair, and groping outstretched hands capture the ruthless nature of this wicked henchman. Sharaku was renowned for creating visually bold prints that gave rare revealing glimpses into the world of kabuki. He was not only able to capture the essential qualities of kabuki characters, but his prints also reveal, often with unflattering realism, the personalities of the actors who were famous for performing them. Because kabuki plays have relatively simple plots, the acting style of the performer is central to the performance. As a result, successful kabuki actors enjoyed great celebrity status. Unlike earlier masters, Sharaku did not idealize his subjects or attempt to portray them realistically. Rather, he exaggerated facial features and strove for psychological realism.
Ando Hiroshige, one of the two leading ukiyo-e landscape artists of the late Edo period (the other being Katsushika Hokusai), is extolled as the artist of poetic landscapes featuring snow, the moon, and rain. Here, a large lantern and a temple gate are so closely viewed that motifs are cropped, while the use of one-point perspective, a Western technique, to depict the pathway to the main hall of Kinryusan temple contrasts the powerful details of the foreground with the inexorability of the temple hall in the distance. Through striking compositions and sophisticated color schemes, Hiroshige represented the great forces of nature, evoking the poetic moods of particular seasons, times of day, and kinds of weather.