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EXPLORING THE SYMBOLIC AND CULTURAL-PHILOSOPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DARUMA DOLL IN JAPANESE CULTURE

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Annotation: This article examines the historical origin, symbolic meaning, and cultural-philosophical significance of the Daruma doll, one of the most important symbols of Japanese culture. The study explores the relationship between the Daruma doll and Buddhist traditions, highlighting its role as a symbol of perseverance, patience, determination, the pursuit of goals, and good fortune. Furthermore, it analyzes the contemporary use of the Daruma doll in Japanese society, particularly its significance in education, business, and everyday life. The findings demonstrate that the Daruma doll is not only an important element of Japan's cultural heritage but also a significant cultural symbol that reflects the Japanese people's worldview, spiritual values, and philosophy of life.

Keywords: Daruma doll, Japanese culture, symbolism, Buddhism, cultural symbol, perseverance, determination**,** goals, philosophy, tradition, cultural heritage.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization, the study of the cultural heritage of different nations and the scientific analysis of their national values and symbolic representations have become important areas of cultural studies. Japan occupies a distinctive place in world civilization owing to its centuries-old traditions, rich spiritual heritage, and unique cultural symbols. One of the most representative symbols of Japanese culture is the Daruma doll, which embodies such values as perseverance, patience, determination, and confidence in achieving success.

The Daruma doll is closely associated with Buddhist traditions, and its origin can be traced to the historical and religious legends surrounding Bodhidharma (Daruma Daishi), the founder of Zen Buddhism. Over time, the Daruma doll has evolved from a religious icon into a widely recognized cultural symbol used in everyday life, education, business, and various social activities in Japan. Today, the Daruma doll is recognized not only in Japan but also in many countries around the world as a symbol of good fortune, resilience, and the pursuit of meaningful goals. The relevance of this study lies in its examination of the symbolic meaning and cultural-philosophical significance of the Daruma doll, which provides deeper insight into the worldview, values, and national identity of the Japanese people. Furthermore, this topic contributes to the development of intercultural dialogue and enhances the academic understanding of the distinctive features of East Asian culture. The aim of this research is to analyze the historical origins, symbolic meaning, and cultural-philosophical significance of the Daruma doll and to examine its role in both traditional and contemporary Japanese society. To achieve this objective, the study investigates the historical background of the Daruma doll, its symbolic elements, its cultural functions within Japanese society, and its practical significance in the modern era.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Previous studies on the origin, symbolic meaning, and role of the Daruma doll in Japanese culture have primarily been conducted within the fields of Japanese cultural studies, religious studies, and anthropology. In particular, scholarly works on traditional Japanese culture, Buddhist philosophy, and systems of cultural symbolism interpret the Daruma doll as a symbol of perseverance, patience, good fortune, and the pursuit of personal goals[4;97]. Moreover, recent research has emphasized the Daruma doll's significance not only as a religious symbol but also as a source of motivation in education, business, and everyday life. This study provides a comparative analysis of scholarly sources that examine the historical development, symbolic meaning, and cultural-philosophical significance of the Daruma doll. The research is based on the works of Japanese and international scholars, academic literature in cultural studies, and reliable electronic resources. The methodological framework of this research is based on historical, comparative-analytical, descriptive, and cultural approaches. The historical method was employed to examine the origin and historical development of the Daruma doll. The comparative-analytical method was used to compare its symbolic meaning with that of other traditional symbols in Japanese culture. The descriptive method was applied to analyze the Daruma doll's physical characteristics, symbolic elements, and practical uses. Finally, the cultural approach made it possible to examine the Daruma doll as an important cultural symbol reflecting the values, worldview, and spiritual heritage of the Japanese people.

DARUMA

The Daruma doll is one of the most well-known traditional symbols of Japan, and its origin is closely associated with Bodhidharma (Daruma Daishi), one of the most influential figures in the history of Buddhism [1;7]. According to historical sources, Bodhidharma was a Buddhist monk who lived in India during the fifth and sixth centuries CE. He later traveled to China, where he made a significant contribution to the development of Chan (Zen) Buddhism. This tradition was subsequently introduced to Japan, where it became widely established as Zen Buddhism. According to legend, Bodhidharma practiced meditation continuously for nine years. As a result of his prolonged meditation, his arms and legs were said to have withered away due to inactivity. This legend is believed to have inspired the distinctive round, limbless design of the Daruma doll. During the eighteenth century, the mass production of Daruma dolls began in Gunma Prefecture, and they soon gained popularity throughout Japan as symbols of good fortune, perseverance, and determination. The Symbolic Meaning of the Daruma Doll Every element of the Daruma doll carries profound symbolic meaning. Its rounded shape represents the ability to recover from adversity and rise again after every setback. This symbolism reflects the well-known Japanese proverb, "Fall seven times, stand up eight" (Nanakorobi Yaoki), which emphasizes resilience and persistence in overcoming life's challenges. The traditional red color of the Daruma doll has long been regarded as a protective color believed to ward off evil spirits and disease. In addition, its thick eyebrows and mustache symbolize longevity, strength, and wisdom [2;37]. One of the most

distinctive features of the Daruma doll is its blank eyes. When a person sets a goal, one eye is painted in while making a wish or commitment. After the goal has been successfully achieved, the second eye is filled in. This custom symbolizes dedication, responsibility, and perseverance in pursuing one's objectives. The Daruma doll embodies core Japanese values such as diligence, patience, perseverance, and self-discipline. In Japanese culture, success is viewed not as a matter of chance but as the result of continuous effort and unwavering determination. Consequently, the Daruma doll serves as a constant reminder to remain resilient in the face of difficulties and to pursue one's goals with persistence. Furthermore, the Daruma doll is closely connected with the principles of Zen Buddhism, particularly self-cultivation, inner discipline, mindfulness, and spiritual resilience. It functions as a cultural symbol that encourages individuals to improve themselves continuously and to remain committed to achieving their aspirations despite obstacles. Today, the Daruma doll is regarded not only as a religious or historical artifact but also as an integral part of everyday life in Japan [5;47]. Students often use Daruma dolls while preparing for entrance examinations, businesspeople display them when launching new ventures, athletes keep them before important competitions, and politicians frequently use them during election campaigns as symbolic representations of hope, determination, and success. Every year, Daruma festivals are held in various regions of Japan [3;25]. During these festivals, old Daruma dolls are ceremonially burned, and new ones are purchased. This ritual symbolizes the completion of previous goals and the beginning of new aspirations, hopes, and ambitions. In the modern era, the Daruma doll has become one of the internationally recognized symbols of Japanese culture. It is widely appreciated as a souvenir, decorative object, and representative of Japan's cultural heritage in many countries around the world. This global recognition demonstrates that the Daruma doll is not only a national cultural symbol but also a universal representation of perseverance, hope, and the pursuit of personal achievement.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The findings of this study indicate that the Daruma doll is far more than a decorative object in Japanese culture. It is a symbolic artifact with profound historical, religious, and cultural-philosophical significance. Its origins are closely linked to Zen Buddhism and the figure of Bodhidharma, while over time it has evolved from a religious symbol into a nationally recognized cultural icon. The analysis demonstrates that the central symbolism of the Daruma doll is based on the values of perseverance, patience, determination, and the ability to overcome adversity. In particular, the doll's ability to return to an upright position after being knocked over reflects the Japanese principle of Nanakorobi Yaoki ("Fall seven times, stand up eight"), which embodies resilience and unwavering determination in the face of life's challenges [6;107]. The tradition of painting the Daruma doll's eyes in two stages further symbolizes the process of setting a clear goal, remaining committed to it, and taking personal responsibility for achieving it. In this respect, the Daruma doll functions not only as a cultural symbol but also as a powerful source of personal motivation and self-improvement. The study also reveals that the role of the Daruma doll has expanded considerably in contemporary Japanese society. It is widely used in education, business, sports, and various other social spheres as a symbol of success, hope, and the fulfillment of aspirations. This demonstrates that the Daruma doll has successfully adapted to the needs of modern society while preserving its traditional cultural significance, making it a multifaceted cultural phenomenon.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the symbolic meaning and cultural-philosophical significance of the Daruma doll in Japanese culture. The findings indicate that the Daruma doll represents perseverance, patience, determination, and the pursuit of success. Furthermore, it continues to play an important role as a significant cultural symbol in contemporary Japanese society. The results of this research contribute to a deeper understanding of Japanese culture and its symbolic traditions while providing a valuable basis for the further development of intercultural and cultural studies.

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