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Influence of *Japonisme* on Art of M. K. Čiurlionis and His Contemporaries

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to show how *Japonisme* was introduced to Europe in the late 19th century and how it influenced artists in major cities. Japanese woodblock prints (*ukiyo-e*), especially those of Hokusai and Hiroshige, fascinated the Impressionists and other contemporaries such as Claude Monet (1840-1926), Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), and James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). Many of them adopted *japonaiserie* motifs in their paintings or sculptures, and it formed a major artistic trend called *Japonisme*. The Lithuanian composer and painter Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911) was also influenced by the trend of *Japonisme*, especially from the paintings of the Impressionists or through artists in Poland. In Poland and Russia, Japanese artworks were imported by artists who had studied abroad, or by wealthy *bourgeoisie* such as Feliks “Manggha” Jasieński (1861-1929), a Polish collector whose nickname was directly associated with *Japonisme*, and Sergey Kitaev (1864-1927), an ardent Russian collector of Japanese artworks. In this article, *Japonisme* in European art in general will be outlined, together with similar tendencies in Čiurlionis’ paintings, and then, examples of *Japonisme*-influenced paintings in Poland and Russia will be briefly shown. Finally, by focusing on Čiurlionis’ paintings, it will be shown how he adopted *Japonisme* in three stages. In the first stage *japonaiserie* motifs were only partially borrowed. In the second stage *ukiyo-e*’s motifs and pictorial schemes were applied to his paintings, and finally, in the third stage of borrowing, expressions of Japanese motifs in his most sublime style will be shown.

Keywords: Čiurlionis, Hokusai, Hiroshige, Japonisme, japonaiserie, ukiyo-e.

Introduction

Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911) was an outstanding Lithuanian, equally talented as a composer and a painter. In his time European arts were facing a major turning point and artists were eager to assimilate far-off foreign cultures in order to break down the wall of conservative traditionalism. The trend of *Japonisme* was one of the most distinctive features which dominated all of Europe from the second half of the 19th century to the beginning of the

20th century. Wealthy *bourgeoisie* had started collecting Japanese handiworks such as ceramics, fans, folding screens (*byōbu*), robes (*kimono*), and especially, colourful woodblock prints (*ukiyo-e*). Some artists adopted in their own works not only Japanese motifs but also unusual modes of representation. Čiurlionis may also have been influenced by Japanese art when he studied and stayed in Poland, Germany and Russia.

The influence of Japanese art on Čiurlionis' paintings was firstly argued by a Japanese researcher Ichiro Kato (1930-2003) in 1976. In his article, he pointed out that Čiurlionis' *Finale* from "Sonata No. 5 (Sonata of the Sea)" (1908, Fig. 1-1) has similarities to Katsushika Hokusai's (1760-1849), *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* from "Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji" (ca. 1831-33, Fig. 1-2) and he presumed that it would be direct influence from the famous Japanese *ukiyo-e*. This theory have been received favourably and accepted generally as an established theory to the present. However, Kato did not consider how Čiurlionis came to know Hokusai's work. In the article, he also mentioned about similarity of colours between Čiurlionis' paintings and Japanese Buddhist pictorial art Mandala, and even invoked a Japanese aesthetic sense of *Wabi-sabi* irrelevantly. These comparisons are interesting enough however, there are only superficial resemblances and he did not clarify when and how Čiurlionis discovered Japanese art in factual contexts.

In Japan, art historians had researched on *Japonisme* from 1970s downward and showed many remarkable achievements. However, the research by Kato was almost unrecognised in Japan because he did not have any connection with an academic society in Japan. Even though an excellent exhibition of Čiurlionis' paintings was held in Tokyo in 1992¹, none of *Japonisme* specialists in Japan tried to consider about the influence of *Japonisme* on Čiurlionis since then.

On the other hand, scholars of Čiurlionis' studies in Lithuania were stimulated by Kato's discovery and has started to consider about the influence of Japanese or Oriental art on Čiurlionis' art. Researches by Antanas Andrijauskas (2003, 2011 and 2013) and Rasa Andriušytė-Žukienė (2004) were the major achievements. Especially, insightful theory have been proposed by Andrijauskas (2011 and 2013) in which he discussed the possibility of the influence from Chinese and Japanese ink wash paintings (*suibokuga*) on Čiurlionis. As examples he pointed out some common features between them, mentioning Shūbun's folding screen (*byōbu*) in the 15th century, *Landscape of the four seasons* (Fig. 1-3), and Čiurlionis' *Allegro* from "Sonata No. 4 (Sonata of the Summer)" (1908, Fig. 1-4) and *Summer II* (1907, Fig. 1-5). However, these similarities seem not fully persuasive lacking substantive historical evidence. Similar to Kato's case, Andrijauskas' theory still remains hypothetical and requires more thoughtful consideration to prove how Čiurlionis could have known about such an old medieval Japanese *suibokuga*.

We instinctively feel some sort of similarities between Čiurlionis' quasi-

monochrome paintings such as *Allegro* from “Sonata No. 2 (Sonata of Spring)” (1907, Fig. 1-6) and Chinese/ Japanese landscape paintings of *suibokuga*, however, there is no affirmative evidence which proves direct or indirect influence from Oriental art. Therefore in this paper, the possible influence from Japanese *ukiyo-e* on Čiurlionis’ paintings will be considered only with materials which Čiurlionis actually had opportunities to see in all probability.

***Japonisme* in Europe and its influence on Čiurlionis and artists in Poland and Russia**

The most famous and well-appreciated *ukiyo-e* in Europe must have been Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849)’s *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* from the series of “Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji” (ca. 1831-33, Fig. 1-2). Because of its unforgettable uniqueness, Hokusai’s masterpiece influenced many French artists including Georges Lacombe (1868-1916)’s *Blue Seascape, Effect of Wave* (ca. 1893, Fig. 2-1), Henri-Gustave Jossot (1866-1951)’s *The Wave* (1891, Fig. 2-2) and Camille Claudel (1864-1943)’s *The Wave* or *The Bathers* (ca. 1893-1903, Fig. 2-3). Hokusai was praised as “one of the most outstanding artist in human history” by Louis Gonse (1841-1926), French art historian and chief editor of the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, in his own journal in 1883. Hokusai’s oeuvre was thoroughly described in several books such as *Hokusai* (1896) by Edmond de Goncourt (1822-1896), and *Etude sur Hokusai* (1896) by Michel Revon (1867-1947). It is a well-known fact that an English painter and illustrator Walter Crane (1845-1915) “introduced new levels of artistic sophistication to the art of illustration: after c. 1870 his designs show the influence of Japanese prints in the use of flat areas of colour and simple, often asymmetrical compositions, and of classical sculpture in the figures and draperies”². The influence of Hokusai’s *Great Wave* could be obviously seen in Crane’s famous painting, *Neptune’s Horses* (1892, Fig. 2-4). Čiurlionis adopted the similar “Great Wave” motive in his painting *Finale* from “Sonata No. 5 (Sonata of the Sea)” (1908, Fig. 1-1). Incidentally, the similar motive of “Great Wave” could be seen in Russian Ivan Bilibin (1876-1942)’s illustration for the picture book, *The Tale of Tsar Saltan* by Aleksandr Pushkin (1905, Fig. 2-5), published three years before Čiurlionis’ painting. It clearly shows that Hokusai’s masterpiece had been well known among the artists of *Mir Iskusstva* in St. Petersburg.

Even though Japanese ceramics were imported and appreciated as a part of *chinoiserie* in the time of Louis XIV of France, the major influence of Japanese art was only possible after the end of the *Sakoku* policy which strictly limited foreign exchanges in Japan from the 17th to the middle of the 19th century. The first major opportunities to introduce Japanese arts in Europe were the International Exhibition in London (1862) and the Exposition Universelle in Paris (1867). Simultaneously, several merchants in Paris and

London actively imported Japanese artworks including *ukiyo-e*. From 1870s onward, Japanese art fascinated European artists such as Whistler, Beardsley, Manet, Degas, Monet, Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Klimt. They unanimously valued Japanese *ukiyo-e* highly, not only because of its exotic motifs but also because of its unusual modes of artistic representation. One important source of inspiration for those artists was an art magazine *Le Japon Artistique* edited by Siegfried Bing (1838-1905) published in 36 volumes in total in 1888-91. The magazine consisted of articles on Japanese arts written by specialists with illustrations of *ukiyo-e*, ink paintings, ceramics and many other handiworks from the Edo period.

Around the same time, Čiurlionis encountered two epoch-making exhibitions of Japanese arts held in Warsaw in the end of his stay in the city. The first exhibition was of Japanese *ukiyo-e* printings held in J. Kriwult's salon in 1900-01 and the second was at the beginning of 1901, of the exhibition of Feliks Jasieński's famous collection of Japanese arts.³ (Alber 1990, pp.14-17). Furthermore, during the trip to Prague, Dresden, Nuremberg, Munich and Vienna in 1906 and the stay in St. Petersburg in his later years, he might have possibly encountered Japanese art in these cities.

In fact, Čiurlionis' paintings contain complex mixtures of influences from various cultures and times. It is not an easy task to point out clear signs of the inspirations from *ukiyo-e* or adoptions of Japanese motifs in each individual work. The paintings described below are just the hypothetical examples that Čiurlionis seemed to have referred some compositional and representational ideas from *ukiyo-e*.

First, here is Claude Monet (1840-1926)'s *Poplars in the Sun* (1891, Fig. 3-1). The two-dimensional arrangement of a line of trees, through which the distant view is partly seen, has been unanimously regarded as the influence from Hokusai's, *Hodogaya on the Tōkaidō* from "Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji" (ca. 1830-32, Fig. 3-2). Similar examples are easily found among Impressionist and Post-Impressionist landscape paintings (Mabuchi 1997, p.131). In Čiurlionis' *Summer I* from the triptych (1907, Fig. 3-3) we can recognise the analogous composition of trees. Is it possible to regard it as influenced by *ukiyo-e*? As mentioned above, Čiurlionis surely saw the exhibitions of *ukiyo-e* in Warsaw about 1900. *Japonisme* was a trend among young Polish artists and they attempted to adopt innovative techniques learned from *ukiyo-e*. The compositional scheme which shows distant views through trees was also tried by Čiurlionis' contemporary Polish painters such as Jan Stanisławski (1860-1907)'s *Poplars on the Water* (1900, Fig. 3-4), Stanisław Kamocki (1875-1944)'s *View over the Monastery at Czerna* (1908, Fig. 3-5), and Ferdynand Ruszczyc (1870-1936)'s *Winter Tale* (1904, Fig. 3-6). It is natural to deduce that Čiurlionis also adopted the same setting *à la japonaise*, inspired directly by *ukiyo-e* or indirectly through the examples of Polish artists. The aesthetics of *Japonisme* are admitted in the paintings by contemporary Russian Igor

Grabar (1871-1960). In his *The Frost* (1905, Fig. 3-7) and *Winter Morning* (1907, Fig. 3-8), the two-dimensional arrangement of a line of trees, through which the distant view is partly seen, has been unanimously regarded as the influence from *Japonisme*.

Next, here is Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890)'s *Japonaiserie: Bridge in the Rain (after Hiroshige)* (1887, Fig. 4-1). He became interested in Japanese *ukiyo-e* in 1885 when he still lived in Arnhem. In Antwerp he decorated the walls of his studio with *ukiyo-e* prints. After he moved to Paris at the end of February in 1886, he often visited the famous antique shop of Siegfried Bing (1839-1905) on the rue de Province and collected hundreds of *ukiyo-e* together with his brother Theo. At that time he made three copies of *ukiyo-e*:

The Courtesan after Keisai Eisen (1790-1848), and two other studies after Hiroshige. One of these examples is shown here from Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858), his *Sudden Shower over Shin-Ōhashi Bridge and Atake* from "One Hundred Famous Views of Edo" (1857, Fig. 4-2).

After 1889, Van Gogh spent his final years at a sanatorium in Saint-Paul-de-Mausolée in southern France. From a window of his room he could see a field of wheat, which he drew in his paintings almost twelve times. "This picture [*Rain* (1889, Fig. 4-3)] of the wheat field during a rainstorm is the only work of its kind he did in the South, and while the idea of representing rainfall by diagonal slashes of paint clearly relates to Van Gogh's interest in Japanese prints, the final effect is completely personal and well beyond any borrowed source. There is truly nothing quite like it in his considerable output--truly nothing so gently and objectively observed, nothing so completely revealing his own state of mind" (Rishel 1995, p. 203).

The depiction of the rain from dark sky by black lines seems to be made by Van Gogh for the first among Impressionists. Furthermore, it is interesting that similar expression could be seen in Čiurlionis' *Summer* (1907, Fig. 4-4). Even though it is more ambiguous and not in straight lines, the rain lines from dark sky could be regarded as an influence from Hiroshige's *ukiyo-e* print or Van Gogh's paintings.

The American-born painter James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) is well-known as an ardent collector of Japanese objects of art and we can easily recognise many Japanese motifs such as kimonos and ceramics in his paintings. Around the same time as Whistler, painters such as Édouard Manet (1832-1883), James Tissot (1836-1902) and Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) were fascinated by Japanese arts as early as the 1860s; however, adopting exotic motifs as eagerly as others, Whistler was outstanding in his originality in consciously introducing the manner of composition peculiar to Japanese art in order to realise his own artistic ideas.

For example, there are obvious resemblances between his painting *Variations in Flesh Colour and Green: The Balcony* (1864/70) (Fig. 5-1) and Torii Kiyonaga's (1752-1815)'s *ukiyo-e, June* from "Twelve Months in the South"

(diptych) (c. 1784, Fig. 5-2). Not only introducing Japanese objects into the painting such as *kimonos*, *shamisen* (a guitar-like instrument) and *uchiwa* (paper fan), Whistler also adopted a whole compositional scheme and scenic setting which takes a broad view from the high ground to the surface of the water. The vertical and horizontal structural outline, a woman who is leaning against the fence and even the Japanese *sudare* (bamboo blind) hanging from the ceiling were surely inspired by Kiyonaga's *ukiyo-e*.

Many Polish painters from the *Młoda Polska* (Young Poland) movement studied abroad and were inspired by the aesthetics of *Japonisme* and painted works *à la japonaise*. Sometimes the influence of *Japonisme* was absorbed through paintings by the Impressionists. For example, Whistler's influence can be found in paintings by two Polish painters. One was Olga Boznańska (1865-1940), who studied art in Munich and was active in Krakow and Paris as a follower of French impressionism. Several Japanese artefacts can be seen in her paintings, such as in her *Japanese Woman* (1889, Fig. 5-3), in which an influence from Whistler's *Symphony in White No. 2* (1864, Fig. 5-4) is present in the white dress and typical Japanese *uchiwa* [fan]. Another was Wojciech Weiss (1875-1950), who studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow: his *Róża in Kimono* (Date unknown, Fig. 5-5) shows a distant echo of Whistler's famous portrait. In his *Musicians* (1904, Fig. 6-1), we can easily recognize the influence of Whistler's *Nocturne: Blue and Gold - Old Battersea Bridge* (ca. 1872-75, Fig. 6-2), the reminiscence of the famous *ukiyo-e*, Hiroshige's *Kyōbashi takegashi* from "One Hundred Famous Views of Edo" (1857, Fig. 6-3). What inspired Whistler here was the unique composition adopting a bridge pier in the middle of the painting and the peculiar viewpoint from the river under its arches. These innovative tactics were unseen in earlier Western paintings. The characteristic faded blue tone evoking the silence of the night was undoubtedly taken from Hiroshige's example.

In Whistler's well-known *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* (1874) (Fig. 7-1), pictorial ambiguity was drastically increased and it caused a great deal of controversy. Some resemblances with Hiroshige's *Fireworks at Ryōgoku* from "One Hundred Famous Views of Edo" (1856-58, Fig. 7-2) are also seen in the common subject matter and its rendering.⁴ Here Whistler learned how to express the "night music" through the interweaving of black colour, light and shade. Thus, the innovative motifs from Hiroshige's *ukiyo-e* made it possible for Whistler to express his nocturnal idea that "a nocturne is an arrangement of line, form, and colour first" in his paintings. Here we could see how much Whistler got closer to musical thinking in art, which is a gateway to abstract paintings of the coming generation in the early 20th century.

Čiurlionis' *Sketch for a Composition* (1908, Fig. 7-3) shows strong influence from the above-mentioned Hiroshige's *Fireworks at Ryōgoku* (1856-58). In the Čiurlionis' sketch, a person on a ship is looking at the sky with stars. The

depiction of the stars seems remarkably similar to Hiroshige's. Moreover, Čiurlionis turned over the stars into his *Allegro* from "Sonata No. 5 (Sonata of the Sea)" (1908, Fig. 7-4). What noteworthy here is that, similar to Whistler's example, Čiurlionis provided a musical title *Allegro* from "Sonata No. 5 (Sonata of the Sea)" for the painting. From this point of view, Čiurlionis may have known Whistler's painting, probably under the same influence as above-mentioned Polish painters of *Młoda Polska*.

Though Čiurlionis never visited London and Paris, from the above-mentioned examples, we could see that he had opportunities to encounter Japanese artworks directly and indirectly. Čiurlionis seemed not as enthusiastic about Japanese arts as were Monet, Van Gogh and Whistler, but it is quite certain that Čiurlionis was one of the artists more or less inspired by *Japonisme*, the trend throughout Europe during this time.

Hokusai's "Manga" and its influence in Europe

The name of Hokusai often appeared in the famous French art magazine *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* in 1870s. The earliest example was an article "Le Japon à Paris" written by Ernest Cheneau (1833-1890) for the commemoration of the Exposition Universelle in Paris 1878. In the article, Cheneau mentioned the characteristics of Japanese art and acclaimed it highly. He especially referred to 15 volumes of *Hokusai Manga* and emphasized the flat and unsymmetrical expressions of Japanese art which cannot be seen in Western art.

Even though the word 'manga' is regarded as Japanese 'comics' or 'cartoon' nowadays, it was originally used for expressing fanciful and satirical drawings in the Edo period.

Hokusai had started drawing in autumn 1812 at house of Maki Bokusen (1775-1824), a patron and student of Hokusai, Hokusai drew over 300 sketches during half a year. The sketches were published in handbook form as *Hokusai Manga* from the publisher Eirakuya Tōshirō in 1814 and gained a favourable reception. Originally it was conceived as a reference work for art students, but it became a bestseller at the time and had been published by 1878 in a total of fifteen volumes, consisting of 970 pages with over 4000 illustrations. *Hokusai Manga* consists of various illustrations from everyday life of human beings, manners and customs, plants and animals, and apparitions in different styles such as caricatures, satirical drawings, multiple-panel illustrations, and narrative depictions, which undoubtedly became the source of inspirations for 'manga' as it is understood nowadays. There was an anecdote about *Hokusai Manga* that it was first brought to Europe with *ukiyo-e* prints as cushioning material for ceramics in 1830s and gradually came to the attention of artists.

In Poland, an abundant collection of Japanese artworks was brought by Feliks

Jasieński (1861-1929, Fig. 8-1), who had stayed in Paris from the mid-1880s where he encountered arts from all over the world, and was especially fascinated by Japanese art. His stay in Paris gave him the opportunity to become acquainted with the latest aesthetic trends, and this experience increased his enthusiasm for collecting oriental art. At the same time, he promoted Japanese art in Poland by holding exhibitions and contributing many articles to major journals. He published a book titled *Manggha, Promenades à travers les mondes, l'art et les idées* (1901, Fig. 8-2). The name of "Manggha" is naturally taken from *Hokusai Manga*. Jasieński also used "Manggha" as his own nickname. His collection of oriental art, donated to the National Museum in Krakow in 1920, consisted of 15,000 objects in total including 6,000 Japanese works. Jasieński considered the 4,500 *ukiyo-e* prints to be "the most elegant and powerful expression of human spirit" (Martini 1999, pp. 162-166).

A direct influence from Japanese illustration could be admitted in paintings by Ferdynand Ruszczyk (1870-1936), who was from a Polish-Danish family, lived in Lithuania and completed his studies at the Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg. He encountered Japanese art at an exhibition during his studies there. According to his letters to Jasieński, he was especially fascinated by Hiroshige's *ukiyo-e* landscapes and adopted his way of depiction in his own paintings (Martini 1999, pp. 172-177). In his *Winter Fairytale* (1904, Fig. 9-1), the snowscape itself suggests the influence of Japanese art, and the resemblance of the shapes of the branches to an illustration from *Hokusai Manga* (Fig. 9-2) is hardly accidental. Interestingly, a similar representation of a tree appears in Čiurlionis' etching *Leafless Tree* (1905-06, Fig. 9-3).

As seen above, direct and indirect influences from *Japonisme* could be seen in paintings of many artists within the *Młoda Polska* movement. Even though Poland is a long distance from London and Paris, then the artistic centres of Europe, the aesthetics of *Japonisme* had surely reached there in the 1890s, and been absorbed by artists who were active in Poland including Čiurlionis.

Some paintings shown below are just the hypothetical examples that suggest that Čiurlionis seems to have referred some compositional and representational ideas from *Hokusai Manga*.

Čiurlionis' painting, *The Sea* (1906, Fig. 10-1) could be considered to be drawn under the influence from an illustration depicting the waves of the sea in *Hokusai Manga* (Fig. 10-2). What is interesting here is that Čiurlionis turned the waves into the field of wheat in his other painting, *Adoration of the Sun* (1909, Fig. 10-3) in which he depicts the shade of an elephant implying an Asian image in the background of the painting. Waves are a basic motif for painters, so it cannot be said with absolute certainty, but the shapes of the waves show considerable similarity in these works by Čiurlionis and Hokusai.

Some parts of *Hokusai Manga* consist of illustrations from people's movements in everyday life. Two pages are devoted exclusively to showing people bending bows with Japanese-style archery (*kyūdo*) (Fig.11-1). Čiurlionis also left sketches of people who are bending bows with Western style archery in his *Sketches for Sagittarius and Scorpio* from cycle of 12 paintings "The Zodiac" (1906, Fig. 11-2), completed as *The Sun is Passing the Sign of Sagittarius* (1906/ 07, Fig. 11-3). Even though, there are different styles of archery in Japan and the West, the fact that both Hokusai and Čiurlionis depicted the movement of people bending bows shows an interesting conceptual coincidence between East and West.

In Russia, *Japonisme* flourished a bit later than Europe at the end of 1890s. Although Russia is the closest country to Japan, Japanese art works were imported there mainly via European cities such as Paris or Munich. Like Jasieński in Poland, Russia had an ardent collector of Japanese art, Sergey Kitaev (1864-1927), a naval officer. He had chances to visit Japan in the course of his duties in 1885-96, and collected 6,000 works in total. Now his collection belongs to the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow (The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, 2011-2013).

Kitaev's collection was exhibited several times in 1896, 1897 and 1905. The last exhibition was organized by Nicholas Roerich (1874-1947), a famous painter who acted as the leader of *Mir Iskusstva* (World of Art) movement in 1910-1916. Roerich encountered Japanese art at Kitaev's exhibition in 1896 when he was a student at the Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg. From that time, he championed Japanese art by writing articles for several journals and newspapers.

Mstislav Dobuzhinsky (1875-1957) was the very person who introduced Čiurlionis to the artists of *Mir Iskusstva*. In his reminiscence on Čiurlionis, Dobuzhinsky recalled when Čiurlionis was in St. Petersburg:

I spoke of the [Čiurlionis'] paintings I had seen to my friends, whose interest was greatly aroused, and before long I invited A. Benois, Somov, Lansare, Bakst, and Sergei Makovsky (editor of the journal *Apollon*) to show them all the works that Čiurlionis had brought with him. [...] Čiurlionis' works amazed everyone first of all with their originality and singularity – he resembled no other painters – and the source of his art seemed profound and mysterious (Goštautas (ed.) 1994, pp. 160-161).

Moreover, Dobuzhinsky wrote about Čiurlionis: "In my home, he was a frequent guest. [...] Čiurlionis apparently felt comfortable and at ease with my family [...] I had a good library of art books and a great many engravings" (Goštautas (ed.) 1994, p. 162). Therefore, together with above-mentioned *Hokusai Manga*, there must have been some opportunities for Čiurlionis to absorb the aesthetics of *ukiyo-e* from Dobuzhinsky's library as well as through the members of *Mir Iskusstva*.

Some of Čiurlionis' paintings show strong resemblances to specific *ukiyo-e* of Hokusai and Hiroshige in their pictorial schemes and fragmentary uses of motifs. What is that Čiurlionis is different from other painters in accomplishing a personal approach to *ukiyo-e*, by adopting the whole composition and the characteristic point of view.

Among the active members of *Mir Iskusstva*, Russian painters such as Igor Grabar and Mstislav Dobuzhinsky studied in Munich and became great admirers of Japanese art. After their return to Russia, *Japonisme* was indeed one of the group's notable artistic traits.

There are some descriptions on Japanese art found in Dobuzhinsky's memoirs:

I am thankful to Grabar for my first acquaintance with Japanese art – in his collection in Munich I saw woodcut prints of Hokusai, Hiroshige and Utamaro. He had already new examples. In 1902, a small and joyful Japanese person, Hasegawa, appeared in St. Petersburg. He spoke little Russian, but visited a lot of artists here and brought perfect Japanese woodcut prints. Everybody bought them from him with enthusiasm, because the prices were not high. [...] I bought only several woodcut prints and a book of Hokusai's 'Manga'. Especially I was fascinated by Hiroshige because of his unexpected composition and decorative landscapes. For me, the view from the corner and 'cutting of nature' were the biggest discoveries (Dobuzhinsky 1987, p. 192).

The application of *Japonisme* in Čiurlionis' paintings

As mentioned above, Čiurlionis went to see two exhibitions of Japanese art during his studies in Warsaw. It is possible that Čiurlionis saw Japanese art directly at these exhibitions in 1900-01. Moreover, he had a chance to be acquainted with members of *Młoda Polska* (Young Poland) movement, who almost all studied in Paris, London, Munich or Vienna and absorbed the aesthetics of *Japonisme* in these cities. Čiurlionis must have been in touch with *Japonisme* trends and its aesthetics. His own travel to Prague, Dresden, Nuremberg, Munich, and Vienna in 1906 may have affected on his style of paintings after 1907.

In this chapter, the influence from *Japonisme* in Čiurlionis' paintings will be considered in three stages: the first stage is partial borrowing of exotic *japonaiserie* motifs. The second is the stage of application of *ukiyo-e*'s pictorial schemes or whole compositions into his paintings, and finally, in the stage of borrowing and application, there appears the elaborate assimilation of *ukiyo-e*'s expressions into his own sublime style.

First, some examples of *japonaiserie* motifs in Čiurlionis' early paintings should be considered. In Čiurlionis', *Night*, from the cycle of 10 paintings

“Fantasies” (1904/ 5, Fig. 12-1), there is a depiction of a bridge whose peculiar shape strongly reminds us of the gate of a Japanese shrine (*torii*) such as we can see in Hiroshige’s *The Fork of Akiba in Kakegawa* (1843-47, Fig. 12-2). *Torii* is a very popular type of gate in Japan and is depicted in many other *ukiyo-e* prints. Therefore, Čiurlionis may have seen another example of this kind of *ukiyo-e*, and adopted it as a motif in his paintings.

The next example of a motif shows a somewhat strange interest of Čiurlionis’. In *Spring Motif* (1907, Fig. 13-1), the shapes of clouds are depicted in a very different way from his other paintings. It is most likely that Čiurlionis adopted the characteristic depiction of clouds from Hokusai’s famous *Mount Fuji Viewed during a Fine Wind on a Clear Morning* from “Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji” (c. 1829-1833, Fig. 13-2).

Likewise, the image of a big bird hovering in the sky in Čiurlionis’ *Fairy Tale No. 2* from cycle Triptych “Fairy Tale” (1907, Fig. 14-1), and Hiroshige’s *Susaki and the Jūmantsubo Plain near Fukagawa* from “One Hundred Famous Views of Edo” (1856-58, Fig. 14-2), are compositional concepts.⁵

When we compare Čiurlionis’ *Finale*, from the cycle “Sonata No. 2 (Sonata of the Spring)” (1907, Fig. 15-1) with Hiroshige’s *The City Flourishing, the Tanabata Festival* from “One Hundred Famous Views of Edo” (1856-58, Fig. 15-2), similarities can be found between the colourful papers (or small flags?) flying in spiral in both images.

As another example, in Čiurlionis’ *Allegro* from “Sonata No. 3 (Sonata of the Serpent)” (1908, Fig. 16-1), the strange shape of the maze-like bridge and its long bridge footings may have been influenced by Hokusai’s *Old View of the Eight-part Bridge at Yatsushashi in Mikawa Province* from “Remarkable Views of Bridges in Various Provinces” (1834, Fig. 16-2). Many similar bridges were depicted in Hokusai’s several other *ukiyo-e* prints, but the similarity of concepts between Čiurlionis and Hokusai is surely undeniable.

As the second stage, let us look at the whole composition or settings. In Čiurlionis’ *Allegro* from “Sonata No. 4 (Summer Sonata)” (1908, Fig. 17-1), tiny sailing boats floating on the water and the position of islands may be inspired by Hiroshige’s *Shinagawa Susaki* from “One Hundred Famous Views of Edo” (1856-58, Fig. 17-2).

Furthermore, the triptych painting *Raigardas* (1907, Fig. 18-1), which is known as a realistic landscape of peacefully gentle hills in the Southern Lithuania, shows some quite unusual features. An attempt to produce panoramic scenery by using three panels sequentially is very unusual among his existing paintings. However, in *ukiyo-e*, it is not rare to use two or three successive papers to represent the spatial dimension and the effect of a bird’s eye view. For example, if we put Hiroshige’s triptych *Whole View of Asukayama* from “Famous Views of the Eastern Capital” (c. 1835-39, Fig. 18-2) beside Čiurlionis’ *Raigardas*, both panoramic scenes seem remarkably similar. He may have seen this kind of triptych of *ukiyo-e* in Warsaw or elsewhere.

In Čiurlionis' paintings, several traces of influence from *ukiyo-e* of Hokusai and Hiroshige can be found in its pictorial schemes and fragmentary uses of motifs. Čiurlionis differs from other painters in that whenever he absorbed Japanese *ukiyo-e*, he accomplished his personal approach by adopting the whole composition and the characteristic point or view.

Finally, as the third stage, let us consider the sublime style of Čiurlionis' "Great Wave" motif adopted in his painting *Finale* from "Sonata No. 5 (Sonata of the Sea)" (1908, Fig. 1-1). The influence of Hokusai's *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* was firstly pointed out by Ichiro Kato (1930-2003) in 1976 (Kato 1976, pp. 40-44). Since then, many scholars have followed him and accepted it as a fact.⁶ The most unique and extraordinary feature in this picture is that he put his initials "MKČ" in the middle of the wave, probably as a symbol identifying his own high creativity. Since Čiurlionis seldom signed his paintings, this painting is very rare in that he drew his large initials in such an eye-catching position. Moreover, the characters are integrated in the wave of the central motif. Čiurlionis, as a composer, was following the tradition of Western music to compose in tone rows based on the spelling of someone's name.⁷ There are many composers who adopted their own initials as the hidden theme of compositions such as Bach's B-A-C-H. Considering this heritage, Čiurlionis might have proudly put his initials into the "musical painting" as a proof of himself as a composer-painter. The gigantic waves which involve the whole may be the symbol of his strong creative motivation. Furthermore, there is a remarkable fact that the series *Sonata of the Sea: Allegro, Andante and Finale* lets us feel an inner link with his musical work, *The Sea: Cycles of Small Landscapes* for piano (1908). The first piece of the cycles, I (VL 317a) could be heard as expressing the constantly repeated waves in the painted *Allegro*, the second piece, II (VL 317b) evokes the mysterious and silent image of the sea in the painted *Andante*, and in the third piece (VL 317c), the chromatic scales could be heard as breaking gigantic wave of painted *Finale*.

Conclusion

As we have seen in this paper, it is true that the prime period of *Japonisme* in Europe was the rather short time from the late 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century. However, the momentum of the time helped *Japonisme* to be a stronger trend especially among artists in Paris. Not only Impressionist painters but also poets and composers were influenced by *Japonisme* and collected Japanese artworks. Impressionist painters and contemporaries such as Monet, Van Gogh and Whistler absorbed *ukiyo-e* prints as a model of some of their paintings and partially borrowed *japonaiserie* motifs, applying *ukiyo-e*'s pictorial schemes or

whole compositions. Surprisingly, not only *ukiyo-e* prints by Hokusai and Hiroshige, but also *Hokusai Manga* were well appreciated among the *bourgeoisie* in Warsaw, Moscow and St. Petersburg, and were mentioned in several autobiographies of artists at the time.

Even though Čiurlionis never visited Paris or London, it seems quite certain that he came to know *Japonisme* through the artists of *Młoda Polska* and the Japanese art collection of Jasieński during his studies in Warsaw. Moreover, he was on the same trend as the Impressionists, borrowing *japonaiserie* motifs from the same *ukiyo-e* as Impressionists and applied them to his paintings in his own way.

Čiurlionis was a talented painter, full of imagination. It may have been noticed in his paintings shown in this paper that, even though Čiurlionis borrowed *japonaiserie* motifs from *ukiyo-e* prints by Hokusai and Hiroshige, his way of applying the motifs was considerably different from other contemporary painters and unique to him. Čiurlionis' paintings contain complex mixtures of the influences from various cultures in different times. It is not an easy task to point out clear signs of inspiration from *ukiyo-e* or adoptions of Japanese motifs in each individual work. The paintings described in this paper were just the hypothetical examples where Čiurlionis seemed to have referred to some compositional and representational ideas from *ukiyo-e*. However, it could be said that some of these coincidences between *ukiyo-e* and Čiurlionis' work should not be regarded as mere chance resemblances.

Even though, Čiurlionis' "Great Wave" in his painting *Finale* from "Sonata of the Sea" showed the influence from Hokusai's "Great Wave" like the major artists active in Paris, his version was painted in Palanga, Lithuania in July 1908. We must not forget that Čiurlionis' strong affection for his country were expressed in his works conceived beside the forest of Lithuania and the Baltic seashore. It could be said that the wave from Japan met the wave from Baltic Sea in the Čiurlionis' painting, giving a strong expressive impact as a synergistic effect.

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Appendix

Fig. 1-1 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911), Finale from "Sonata No. 5 (Sonata of the Sea)" (1908), National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum, Kaunas

Fig. 1-2 Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), The Great Wave off Kanagawa from "Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji" (ca. 1831-33), Private collection

Fig. 1-3 Attributed to Shūbun (Dates of birth and death unknown) Landscape of the four seasons (Muromachi Period/ 15th century), Tokyo National Museum

Fig. 1-4 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911), *Allegro from "Sonata No. 4 (Sonata of the Summer)"* (1908), National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum, Kaunas

Fig. 1-5 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911), *Summer II* (1907), National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum, Kaunas

Fig. 1-6 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911), *Allegro from "Sonata No. 2 (Sonata of Spring)"* (1907), National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum, Kaunas

Fig. 2-1 Georges Lacombe (1868-1916), Blue Seascape, Effect of Wave (ca. 1893), Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rennes

Fig. 2-2 Henri-Gustave Jossot (1866-1951), The Wave (1891), Collection Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, New Jersey

Fig. 2-3 Camille Claudel (1864-1943), The Wave or The Bathers (ca. 1893-1903), Musée Rodin, Paris

Fig. 2-4 Walter Crane (1845-1915), Neptune's Horses (1892), Neue Pinakothek, Munich

Fig. 2-5 Ivan Bilibin's illustration from the picture book, "The Tale of Tsar Saltan" (1905), Private collection

Fig. 3-1 Claude Monet (1840-1926), Poplars in the Sun (1891), The National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo

Fig. 3-2 Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), Hodogaya on the Tōkaidō, from "Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji" (ca. 1830-32), Private collection

Fig. 3-3 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911), Summer I from the triptych (1907), National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum, Kaunas

Fig. 3-4 Jan Stanisławski (1860-1907), Poplars on the Water (1900), National Museum, Krakow

Fig. 3-5 Stanisław Kamocki (1875-1944) View over the Monastery at Czerna (1908), National Museum, Krakow

Fig. 3-6 Ferdynand Ruszczyc (1870-1936) Winter Tale (1904), National Museum, Krakow

Fig. 3-7 Igor Grabar (1871-1960), The Frost (1905), The Art Museum, Yaroslavl

Fig. 3-8 Igor Grabar (1871-1960), Winter Morning (1907), The Art Museum, Sevastopol

Fig. 4-1 Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), Japonaierie: Bridge in the Rain (after Hiroshige) (1887), Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

Fig. 4-2 Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858), Sudden Shower over Shin-Ōhashi Bridge and Atake from "One Hundred Famous Views of Edo" (1857), Private collection

Fig. 4-3 Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), Rain (La Pluie) (1889), Philadelphia Museum of Art

Fig. 4-4 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911), Summer (1907), National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum, Kaunas

Fig. 5-1 James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Variations in Flesh Colour and Green: The Balcony* (1864/70), Freer Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

Fig. 5-2 Torii Kiyonaga (1752-1815), *June from "Twelve Months in the South"* (diptych) (c. 1784), Private collection

Fig. 5-3 James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Symphony in White No. 2* (1864), Tate Gallery, London

Fig. 5-4 Olga Boznańska (1865-1940), *Japanese Woman* (1889), Private collection

Fig. 5-5 Wojciech Weiss (1875-1950), *Rózia in Kimono* (Date unknown), Private collection

Fig. 6-1 Wojciech Weiss (1875-1950), *Musicians* (1904), Private collection

Fig. 6-2 James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Nocturne: Blue and Gold - Old Battersea Bridge* (ca. 1872-75), Tate Britain, London

Fig. 6-3 Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858), *Kyōbashi takegashi* from "One Hundred Famous Views of Edo" (1857), Private collection

Fig. 7-1 James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* (1874), Detroit Institute of Arts

Fig. 7-2 Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858), *Fireworks at Ryōgoku* from "One Hundred Famous Views of Edo" (1856-58), Private collection

Fig. 7-3 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911), *Sketch for a Composition* (1908), National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum, Kaunas

Fig. 7-4 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911), *Allegro* from "Sonata No. 5 (Sonata of the Sea)" (1908), National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum, Kaunas

Fig. 8-1 Feliks Jasiński (1861-1929), Feliks Jasiński in Japanese helmet and kimono on the balcony of his apartment, Archival photograph, National Museum, Krakow

Fig. 8-2 Feliks Jasiński (1861-1929), Title page of “Manggha, Promenades à travers les mondes, l’art et les idées” (1901)

Fig. 9-1 Ferdynand Ruszczyc (1870-1936), Winter Fairytale (1904), National Museum, Krakow

Fig. 9-2 Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), Illustration from Hokusai Manga (published ca. 1814-78), Private collection

Fig. 9-3 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis "Leafless Tree" (Fluor etching, 1905-06), National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum, Kaunas

Fig. 10-1 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911), The Sea (1906), National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum, Kaunas

Fig. 10-2 Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), Illustration of waves from Hokusai Manga (published ca. 1814-78), Private collection

Fig. 10-3 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, Adoration of the Sun (1909), National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum, Kaunas

Fig. 11-1 Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), Illustration of archers from Hokusai Manga (published ca. 1814-78), Private collection

Fig. 11-2 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911), Sketches for Sagittarius and Scorpio from cycle of 12 paintings "The Zodiac" (1906), National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum, Kaunas

Fig. 11-3 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911), The Sun is Passing the Sign of Sagittarius, from cycle of 12 paintings "The Zodiac" (1906/ 07), National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum, Kaunas

Fig. 12-1 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911), Night, from cycle of 10 paintings “Fantasies” (1904/ 5), National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum, Kaunas

Fig. 13-1 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911), Spring Motif (1907), National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum, Kaunas

Fig. 12-2 Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858), The Fork of Akiba in Kakegawa (1843-47), Private collection

Fig. 13-2 Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), Mount Fuji Viewed during a Fine Wind on a Clear Morning from “Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji” (ca. 1830–32), Private collection

Fig. 14-1 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911), Fairy Tale No. 2 from triptych “Fairy Tale” (1907), National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum, Kaunas

Fig. 14-2 Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858), Susaki and the Jūmantsubo Plain near Fukagawa from “One Hundred Famous Views of Edo” (1856-58), Private collection

Fig. 15-1 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911), Finale from "Sonata No. 2 (Sonata of the Spring)" (1907), National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum, Kaunas

Fig. 15-2 Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858), The City Flourishing, the Tanabata Festival from "One Hundred Famous Views of Edo" (1856-58), Private collection

Fig. 16-1 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911), *Allegro* from "Sonata No. 3 (Sonata of the Serpent)" (1908), National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum, Kaunas

Fig. 16-2 Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), *Old View of the Eight-part Bridge at Yatsushashi in Mikawa Province* from "Remarkable Views of Bridges in Various Provinces" (1834), Private collection

Fig. 17-1 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911), *Allegro* from "Sonata No. 4 (Summer Sonata)" (1908), National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum, Kaunas

Fig. 17-2 Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858), *Shinagawa Susaki* from "One Hundred Famous Views of Edo" (1856-58), Private collection

Fig. 18-1 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911), *Raigardas* (triptych) (1907), National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum, Kaunas

Fig. 18-2 Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858), *Whole View of Asukayama* (triptych) from "Famous Views of the Eastern Capital" (c. 1835-39), Private collection

Endnotes

- ¹ Exhibition title “M. K. Čiurlionis: Fantasist and Mystic of Fin-de-siècle Lithuania”. Sezon Museum, Tokyo. From March 7th to April 5th, 1992. 150 works in total were exhibited including 60 paintings.
- ² Christopher Newall. “Crane, Walter.” *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed September 14, 2014, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T020135>.
- ³ The fact was told by Prof. Andriušytė-Žukienė directly to the author through e-mail on October 12th, 2010.
- ⁴ These resemblances have been pointed out by many scholars: Child (1889), Pennell (1911) and Ono (2003).
- ⁵ Also mentioned in Andriušytė-Žukienė (2004): 98.
- ⁶ Lithuanian scholars, Andrijauskas (2003, 2011 and 2013) and Andriušytė-Žukienė (2004) also mentioned about the influences of Japanese *ukiyo-e* on Čiurlionis’ paintings.
- ⁷ Čiurlionis composed Variations on the Theme Sefaa Esec (VL 258) (1904) and Variations on the Theme Besacas (VL 265) (1904-05?). Both of the works adopt his friend’s initials as the themes.

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