

CHAPTER 5

Creativity within a Geographical-National Framework

From Modern Japanese Design to Pevsner's Art Geography

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The idea of the national character of a nation's art and design, and the stressing of the validity of a geographical-national framework in the historiography of art and design have been denigrated and disparaged for some time. This is partly due to the fact that such an idea of and approach to art/design historical enquiry actually held a racist complexion before and during World War II in many countries, and inevitably reminds us of racist nationalism in action. However, should the validity of such an art/design historical approach and interest be completely denied or considered taboo because of its association with past nationalism and racialism?

Living as we do in a rapidly globalizing age, an age in which, in various countries, multi-racial communities are appearing and yet antagonizing each other within particular geographical-national frameworks, there can be no better time than now to direct our attention toward how people have acted under certain cultural, social and political circumstances within such frameworks. Taking the development of modern Japanese design in the Meiji era (1868 to 1912) as a concrete example, this chapter argues that it is still, even in today's cosmopolitan society, entirely appropriate to take a serious look at a geographical-national framework as a means of exploring the captivating world of human creativity in art, architecture and design, and it can also be a convincingly valid approach for the historiography of art and design.

Westernization of Japan in the Meiji Era

The notion of national character strongly attracted the attention of Japanese architects and designers in the period from the 1860s to the first decade of the twentieth century. This was an ambivalent, intuitive reaction to the ongoing Westernization of their homeland. In the Meiji era in particular, Westernization was perceived as the only effective way of raising the standards of Japanese architecture and design in order to reach contemporary global standards set by the dominant world powers. Following the decision of the central government in Japan in 1859 to open Japan to foreign trade and diplomatic relations, mainly with Western superpowers such as the USA, Britain, the Netherlands and France, Japan entered a new era of Westernization in which globalization of technology, industry and design was aggressively pursued by both the public and private sectors. Accordingly, underscoring the imminent need to catch up to the technological level of the Western world, Western building technology and architectural styles attracted wide interest and rapidly spread throughout Japan. Such technology and Westernized styles of architecture were first introduced in military buildings, then in a number of government-operated public 'role-model' factories. The designs were made by foreign engineers who had been invited to Japan by the central government. Many of the state-owned, state-operated factories were constructed in the 1860s and early 1870s: one of these was the Tomioka Silk Mill (1872) in Tomioka, Gunma (registered as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2014), designed by the French engineer Auguste Bastien, under the supervision of fellow French engineer Paul Brunat.

Before long, an extremely eccentric application of Western design was to be found in *Gi-Yōfū* architecture: quasi-Western-style architecture, an eclectic architectural style creatively combining imported Western elements with traditional Japanese construction techniques and decoration. Such architecture was designed by master carpenters, deeply versed in traditional building techniques peculiar to Japan, whose lack of formal training and knowledge of genuine Western-style architecture freed them to be bold in intermingling Japanese and Western elements. Such a practice reminds one of Samuel Pepys Cockerell's Neo-Mughal design for Sezincote House in Gloucestershire, England (1805–1812), in which elements from Indian architecture were combined ostentatiously in a Neoclassical style.

Fearless and quirky interpretation of Western-style architecture started to appear in Japan in the latter half of the 1860s and reached its peak in the 1870s. Among such masterpieces of Japanized Western design are the Tokyo Tsukiji Hotel for Foreign Travelers in Tsukiji, Tokyo (1868); the Mitsui-gumi House (subsequently the First National Bank) at Kaiun Bridge in Nihonbashikabutochō, Tokyo (1872) (Fig. 5.1); the Mitsui-gumi House in Surugachō, Tokyo (1874); Kaichi Gakko Primary School in Matsumoto, Nagano (1873); and the Tsuruoka Police Station in Tsuruoka, Yamagata (1884). Whilst such



Figure 5.1 Kisuke Shimizu II, Mitsui-gumi House at Kaiun Bridge, Tokyo, Japan (1872). Photo courtesy of Architectural Institute of Japan, Tokyo, Japan.

interpretations of Western architecture were earnestly pursued and resulted in a series of rather eccentric examples of eclecticism in provincial cities, authentically Western architecture was designed in the capital city of Tokyo and other large cities by foreign technical advisors to the government, amongst whom were Josiah Conder from Britain, Jean Giovanni Vincenzo Cappelletti from Italy, and Hermann Ende and Wilhelm Böckmann, both from Germany (Itō, Ōta and Sekino 1976: 184–186).

Conder contributed most to the development of modern Japanese architecture. He was born in 1852 in London, and, following his study at the University of London, worked for the famed Gothic revivalist William Burges. In 1877, when he was twenty-four years old, he was invited by the Japanese government to be one of its foreign technical advisors, and in that capacity taught architecture at the Imperial College of Engineering in Tokyo.

Tatsuno in London and the Issue of National Style

Josiah Conder's first students graduated from the Imperial College of Engineering in 1879. Amongst them was Kingo Tatsuno, who was sent to Britain the following year as a government-sponsored student. In London, while studying architecture at the University of London, Tatsuno worked

for the architectural firm of Conder's former employer, Burges, a practicing architect, who undertook the task of teaching Tatsuno, albeit for a short period. Whilst studying in Britain, Tatsuno is said to have been very open, sociable and energetic, and having an avid desire to absorb both the spirit and principles, as well as the technical design and construction skills, of the latest styles of Western architecture (Azuma 2002: 191–210).

What most captured Tatsuno's attention while he was studying in Britain seems to have been the issue of national style. In Britain, by the late nineteenth century, the matter of a style emblematic of Imperial Britain had long been widely discussed and debated. As Francis Goodwin noted, when the plan for rebuilding the Houses of Parliament in either a Gothic or Elizabethan style was announced in the mid-1830s, 'for civil purposes, public or private, the town hall, exchange or senate-house; the Greek, Roman or Italian styles are universally admitted to be applicable' (Clark 1950: 153); yet there were also people who believed that 'Gothic was essentially an English style' and therefore 'the national style' (Clark 1950: 154). By the late 1860s, Gothic, which had originally emerged in northern France in the twelfth century, had come to be widely considered to be the national style of Britain, and this notion led to the triumph of Victorian Gothic Revivalism. Unlike the parliamentary competition in the mid-1830s, in which the style of the buildings was to be, according to guidelines set by the Select Committee, 'either Gothic or Elizabethan style' (House of Commons 1835: 4), there were no specific instructions favouring any particular style in the designated competition for the Royal Courts of Justice held in 1866–1867. Yet William Burges and ten other renowned architects who had been invited to compete all used the same style: Gothic. The stylistic uniformity of the submitted competition designs suggests that, by that time, Gothic had been fully recognized as the national style of Britain, emblematic of the national character.

Among Tatsuno's various perceptions whilst in Britain was his observation that, in the course of the 'battle of styles' between Neoclassical and Gothic, architects of that time were keen to define a style emblematic of the national character, whilst the origin and authenticity of the style were not considered important. Upon his return to Japan, Tatsuno was appointed Professor of Architecture at the Imperial College of Engineering, succeeding his former supervisor, Conder, and in the first examination he gave to students in 1885 he asked them to explain what elements should influence the formation of a national (Japanese) architectural style, a question almost identical to one on his first examination at the University of London on 21 June 1880 (Azuma 2002: 198–200).¹ Today Tatsuno is not necessarily considered a theoretical architect, yet his interest in the issue of national style in architecture demonstrates how straightforwardly the British emphasis on the search for a national style, as a cultural entity, had influenced his own approach toward the development of Japanese architecture.

The 1910 Debate: Japanese National Character as Expressed in Architecture

Throughout the Meiji era, government-trained architects like Tatsuno were given a number of splendid opportunities to execute large-scale enterprises of national importance. In the course of advancing Westernization in Japan, the Japanese government decided to take active steps to bring foreign influence and Western style into the Japanese architectural scene: thus, a new interest in the national character of Japanese architecture started to attract the attention of many Japanese architects. The question of how a modern Japan could rise from the acceptance of outside influence in order to assert its own architectural identity in the midst of such Western rivals as Britain, Germany, France and the USA, *viz.*, the subject of the geography of Japanese architectural design, attracted a growing number of designers and architects.

In the latter half of the Meiji era, even more diverse views of the national character of Japanese architecture arose. Kikutarō Shimoda, a former student at the Imperial University (originally established as Tokyo University in 1877 and renamed in 1886, absorbing the Imperial College of Engineering), who had dropped out to study in the USA and subsequently opened his own firm in Chicago, was keen to define the national style of Japan as a mixture of Western elements and authentic Japanese style. After returning to Japan, Shimoda later came to strongly oppose the erection of the new Diet Building in an entirely Western style, proposing instead a new style which he termed *Teikan-heigō shiki*, i.e., 'Imperial Crown Eclecticism'. The style was essentially a unique and audacious combination of a Westernized Neoclassical external facade and a Japanese-style roof reminiscent of that of a Japanese shrine/temple or donjon (Fig. 5.2). Conversely, Chuta Itō, a nationalist architect who taught a course on Japanese architectural history, the only course taught in Japanese for architectural students in those days, at the Imperial University of Tokyo (changed from the



Figure 5.2 Kikutarō Shimoda's design submitted for the competition for the Imperial Diet of Japan (1919) evinces his 'Imperial Crown Eclecticism'.

Source: K. Shimoda, *Shisō to Kenchiku*, Tokyo: Tokyo-dō, 1928. Photo courtesy of Waseda University Library, Tokyo, Japan.

name Imperial University in 1897), severely criticized Shimoda's eclecticism as 'a national disgrace' (Itō 1937: 99–100), and instead insisted that the origins of Japanese architecture were to be found in other parts of Asia.

In 1910, the Architectural Institute of Japan held two open forums, both chaired by Tatsuno, in order to debate the issue of 'the national style of architecture for the future Japan' (Yatsuka 2005: 124–125), inviting the leading architects of the time to present their various views as to how the national character of Japan should be expressed in architecture. Some claimed that an eclectic style, blending Western and Japanese elements, would be emblematic of the national character of modern Japan (Ōkawa 2012: 45). Some insisted on the necessity of using every architectural style ever created to formulate a national style based on an aesthetic taste that had been expressed throughout the history of Japanese architecture (Ōkawa 2012: 45). There were also those who simply contended that Western styles should be adopted as the national style of Japan (Ōkawa 2012: 45; Yatsuka 2005: 137). Another view was that the national style should be derived from the aesthetic preferences of the majority of people (Ōkawa 2012: 45; Yatsuka 2005: 120). In addition, there were pundits who stressed the role of the *Zeitgeist* in the formation of a new national style of architecture, and functionalists who defined the basic principle of architectural beauty to be merely a mechanical representation of 'gravity' and 'structure' (Ōkawa 2012: 45). As for Tatsuno, his attitude toward the active contemporary adaptation of Western styles, the state of which he had compared to 'an international exposition', was strongly affirmative; and he was convinced that a national style for Japan would emerge in the course of time in a society highly receptive to foreign styles of architecture (Tatsuno 1990: 405). The diversity of opinions expressed throughout the debate, and the fact that a clear consensus in regard to the stylistic manifestations of the national character of Japan could not be reached, clearly show that national character, as it expresses itself in art, ought to emerge with a widened, not narrowed, sense of national possibility. The ultimate conclusion thus was that the pursuit of national character and the formation of a national style could not be arbitrary, i.e., this is Japanese, and let no Japanese try to do otherwise.

Japanese Industrial Design in the Age of Westernization

The same conclusion was reached in the course of searching for the national character or style native to the geographical-national framework of Meiji Japan in the domain of industrial design. However, whereas in architecture Westernization was perceived as the only effective way of reaching the standards set by Western countries, in design the exchange was reciprocal, as there was a craze for *Japonisme* in late nineteenth-century continental Europe. *Japonisme* became a matter of interest first among young artists who saw in its thread of

exoticism a key to revitalizing the dreary state of the Western art scene at that time, and sooner or later this led to the rise of *japonisant*. There was also interest in Japanese art and design in Britain. For instance, the British government decided in 1876, a few years prior to Tatsuno's dispatch to Britain by the Japanese government, to assign Christopher Dresser, an industrial designer and design theorist, later a renowned advocate of Japanese design and culture, as an envoy to Japan in order to conduct an extensive survey of both traditional and contemporary Japanese design and decorative art.

The wide-ranging Western interest in Japanese art and design, from the government down to individual print and craftwork collectors, created the possibility of a potential market for Japanese industrial products. Hence, when the invitation for the 1873 Vienna International Exposition was received by Japan in 1871, it was only natural for the Japanese government to collect 'traditional' Japanese handicrafts, with which the Japanese heritage in arts and crafts could be easily associated, as articles to be displayed at the exposition. Even when it was decided to include large-scale showpieces in anticipation of their strong appeal to Westerners (Mori 2009: 22), all the selections were related to Japanese art-cultural heritage. Amongst them was a golden *Shachihoko*, a decoration in the shape of a fabled fish with a leonine head and a tail pointing skyward, taken from the top of the roof of the donjon of Nagoya Castle (see Fig. 5.3). It was the consistent policy of the Japanese government to employ international expositions as occasions to promote Japanese industrial art products and the notion of oriental exoticism: thus, even the Japanese pavilion was built in an ultra-exotic manner that awkwardly compounded the wooden structure of a Shinto shrine with a Japanese garden. In the Viennese exposition, the industrial policy of Japan, aimed toward expansion of an international demand for Japanese 'traditional industrial' art products, was cordially received, and many of the objects displayed were purchased by Westerners. Even the pavilion and the garden, with all its trees, were sold to the Alexander Park (Mori 2009: 25), a British trading company established by Dresser, who himself played an indispensable role in the conclusion of this sale. Thus, in response to the high demand for delicately produced Japanese design overseas, the Japanese government's promotion of Japan's seemingly primitive, but nevertheless skilfully made, traditional arts and crafts came to be considered a profitable enterprise.

The newly affirmed state undertaking in industrial art and the discussion which followed were driven chiefly by two factors: 1) increasing self-confidence among Japanese government officials and craftspeople in the level of Japanese craftsmanship as an art-cultural heritage with several hundred years of tradition; and 2) high expectations for the economic impact of Western demand for Japanese industrial art products (Hirayama 1925: 2–4; Kinoshita 2005: 52–54). The former was accompanied by a government scheme for tracing the art-historical identity of Japan through a history of Japanese arts and crafts and

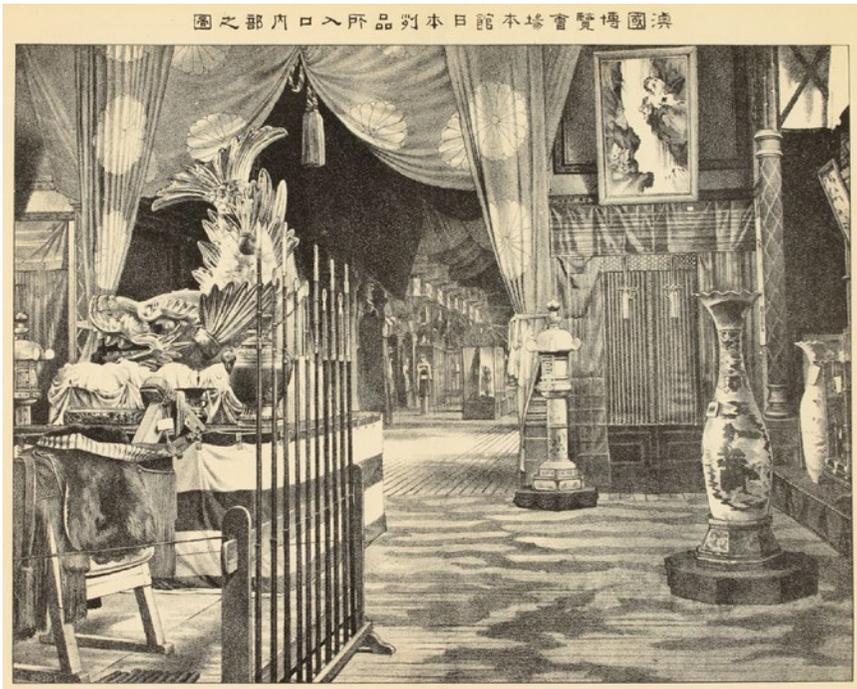


Figure 5.3 Japanese exhibits at the 1873 Vienna International Exposition. Source: Y. Tanaka and S. Hirayama (eds), *Oukokuhakurankai Sandou Kiyou*, Tokyo: Haruo Mori-yama, 1897. Photo courtesy of Waseda University Library, Tokyo, Japan.

through preservation of traditional Japanese handicrafts, which had already led to the promulgation of *Koki Kyubutsu Hozon-kata*, the specialized law for preserving antiques and ancient artefacts, in 1871. The Japanese government of this time was confident that the beauty of Japanese arts and crafts and industrial art met international standards and that the government would therefore make a handsome profit out of the export business of Japanese industrial art products and designs.

Before long, however, the ‘Japaneseness’ of Japanese traditional arts and crafts and industrial design, underpinned by the fashion for *Japonisme*, became *passé*, as Japanese backwardness in the area of industrial design gradually became conspicuous after the initial success at the Vienna International Exposition. In this predicament, the modernization of Japanese industrial art production was vigorously pursued, and individual manufacturers were positive about adopting new Western technology and methods of corporate management. The necessity of producing designs which met contemporary Western needs for and in daily life was stressed. As had been stated in 1897, in order to export Japanese crafts the Japanese industrial art world had to conform to international standards of usage, robustness and uniformity of design (Mori 2009: 65–66). It was, however, the fact that Japanese exhibits were received unfavourably at the



Figure 5.4 Candle stand with chrysanthemum design in black lacquer, an example of Japanese design for Western lifestyle, mainly produced in the late 1870s and after. Photo courtesy of The Imperial Household Agency, Tokyo, Japan.

1900 Paris International Exposition that revealed that closing the gap between Western standards of design and the under-developed state of Japanese design had become a most pressing issue for the Japanese government. For designers, the question of how Japan could assert a modern national identity in design which expressed the Japanese character, while still conforming to Western standards of manufacture and usage, came to be the focal point of their attention. In 1901, the *Dai-Nippon Zuan Kyōkai* (Great Japan Design Association) was founded, and beginning in the late Meiji era Japanese government-supported apprentices in the fields of design and decoration were dispatched to Western countries (Mori 2009: 81).

What is of the utmost interest to observe at this stage of development in the history of Japanese design is that the search for a Japanese character

in industrial art and design had not – as might be expected – resulted in any extreme nationalism driven by racist impulses and emphasis on national heredity and heritage. Just as in the case of Japanese architecture in the late Meiji era, the pursuit of national character in industrial design, although defined within a geographical-national framework, was never chauvinistic. For designers actively involved in the front lines of Japanese design at the time, there were mainly three possible approaches in their search for expression of national character: 1) rigorous study and adaptation of Western precedents; 2) an eclectic approach, blending Western and Japanese elements; and 3) formulation of a national design based on aesthetic taste expressed throughout the history of Japanese traditional arts and crafts (Matsuoka 1914: 7). A new group of designers also emerged, at the tail end of the Meiji era, who refused to blindly follow current trends and acceptance of dominant Western standards of design; instead, they thoughtfully selected from the wisdom of Western forefathers of industrial design (Tuchida 2008: 91–98, 128–131). Amongst them was Kenkichi Tomimoto, the first ‘living national treasure of Japan’,² who returned to Japan in 1910 from Britain, where he had studied the art of William Morris (Fig. 5.5) (Tuchida 2008: 95–96).³

National Character of a Nation as ‘a Self-conscious Cultural Entity’

By observing the tireless application of architects and designers of the time to the study of how the national character of Japan could be expressed in design in response to the rapid Westernization of Meiji Japan, it can be seen that their quest for the ‘Japaneseness’ of Japanese design led, not necessarily to the reinforcement of nationalism in design driven by a nationalistic/racist impulse, but to diversity of creativity within a geographical-national framework, all in the desire to manifest the national character of Japan through artefacts. It was Sir Nikolaus Pevsner (1902–1983) who, from an art/architectural/design historian’s point of view, distinguished between the idea of a national character expressed in a nation’s art and nationalism/racism in action. In his BBC Reith Lecture series entitled ‘The Englishness of English Art’, broadcast in 1955, Pevsner eschewed the idea of national character expressed in a racist/jingoistic fashion in favour of the idea that national character expressed through art is not necessarily rigid, narrow or dogmatic in claiming equivalence between a nation’s racial heredity and its art.

When Pevsner presented ‘The geography of art’ as the opening lecture of the series, taking as his subject a new geographical historiography of art concerning ‘national character as it expresses itself in art’ (Pevsner 1956: 11), he meant by ‘national character’ the character of a nation as ‘a self-conscious cultural entity’ (Pevsner 1956: 185), not the evidence of a racial community.

(14)



ウイリアム・モリスの話

(上)

富本 憲吉

サウスケンシントン博物館の裏門から這入つて二階に上つた左側の室を通つて左に廻つた室が諸種の圖案を列べてある處と記憶します、私は其處で初てモリスの製作した壁紙の下圖を見ました。

ウイリアム・モリス五十二歳頃の肖像



初めて見た時から勿論大變面白いものであると考へて居りましたが、追々ご見なれるに連れて、たまらなく面白く考へました、眞面目な、ゼントルマンらしい、英吉利風な作家の、けだかい趣味が強く私の胸を打ちました。
「手で製作した面白み」が機械の音で追々ご亂されて行く事を、餘り人々が注意して居なかつた時代に熱心な良い趣味の復活を美術工藝の上に盡力して呉れた人は實にウイリアム・モリスであります。

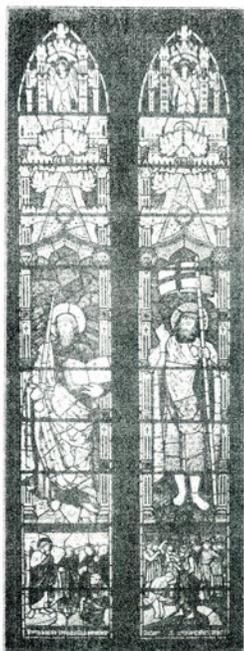
モリスは
千八百三十
四年の春、
英國エセッ
タスのワル
サムストウ
と云ふ處で
生れました、

古風な田舎

の大きい森や寺の尖塔が誰れにも持つ事の出来な
い彼れ特別の趣味に非常な影響をあたへた事と思
はれます、又千八百五十二年オックスフォードのエ
クセタル大學に入學しました、其の事と其の時モ
リスの周圍に居た友人が彼れの製作と特有な趣味
に關してモリスの一生を通じて重大な問題の一
つであらうと考へます。

今から六十年程前のオックスフォードには、謂ゆる
近世主義が未だ充分に芽ささず、又市街にも古
風な面影が少しは残つて居りました、コウ云ふ事

が中世紀を夢みて其の味のある色彩をねらつたモ
リスの趣味に幾分の影響をあたへた事と思はれま
す、彼れが「古い美くしい建物や、風習の壞れて行
くのを惜しむた話の中に「英國中で最も美くしい
立派な此のオックスフォードの町と近郊が無智な思
慮なき人々の手に見る影もなく汚がされた、自分
の知り出してから三十年の中に無法な目に遇つた
美しい古い此の町の爲めに自分はかなしむ、若い
人々に良い書物や博物館の様に貴い氣持を教へて



聖ペルセ等のステインド・グラス 人物 ウイリアム・モリス モリス事務所製作

居る古い街の面白みが追々消滅して行くのを見る
に忍びない」と云ふて居ります、ルアンやアマ
ン其の他の佛國にある古跡を稱賛し、之れが保存
に付いて種々な意見を公表して居ります。

消え去らうとするゴシック期の氣持を復活し様
と企てたモリスは古い寺院の色遣子の窓を通つて
來る光線、聖壇の表象的な彫刻像、灰色した建築
材料の面白みの研究に、熱心な長い時間を費した
事でしょう。

其他オックスフォードの大學時代に有名なバアン

Figure 5.5 Opening page of Kenkichi Tomimoto's article on William Morris, published in two parts in the art journal *Bijutsu Shinpō* in February and March 1912.

Pevsner 'had been exposed' to the idea of the national character of art by 'the majority, if not all, of his early teachers' (Harries 2011: 486), one of these teachers being Pevsner's supervisor at Leipzig University, Wilhelm Pinder. In Germany, 'as early as the latter half of the nineteenth century', interest in the

national character of art throughout history had already taken on ‘an increasingly racist complexion’ (Harries 2011: 486; Whyte 2013: 21, 45). Pevsner, however, purposely downplayed the impact and roles of regionalism, race and national heredity. Writing in 1956 in the introductory chapter of the published version of his lectures, *The Englishness of English Art*, Pevsner stressed that, while being aware that ‘nationalism has had such a come-back in the last twenty years, and that new small national states have appeared and are appearing everywhere on the map’ (Pevsner 1956: 11), ‘nation, as a self-conscious cultural entity, is always stronger than race’ (Pevsner 1956: 185). This view must have reflected Pevsner’s intense concern regarding his own transnational background and upbringing. Pevsner was a German-born Russian Jew ‘who had no great desire to be Jewish’ (Whyte 2013: 4). Baptized in the Lutheran church, he was certainly an ‘outsider’ in the Jewish community in Germany. Although he hoped that ‘the National Socialist reign would be short and that life in Germany would soon, somehow, return to normal’ (Whyte 2013: 7), it has been noted that, even in the early 1930s, Pevsner was politically sympathetic to the National Socialists, professing to be ‘a Nationalist’ in May 1933, several months prior to his dismissal from his academic post at Göttingen, and publishing a paper with pro-National Socialist sentiments in March 1934 entitled ‘Kunst und Staat’ for the German nationalist journal *Der Türmer* (Whyte 2013: 5–8).

Pevsner was highly conscious of and insecure about being ‘different’, not only in his native Germany in the early 1930s, but also in Britain, where he was exiled during World War II. The sense of insecurity he felt about being a ‘stranger in a strange land’ led him naturally to oppose discussing ‘the coming together of the nation from its racial origins’ (Causey 2004: 167), and also to separate analysis of national character in art from a view which held race and art to be inseparable.

Pevsner denied the validity of race, national heredity and racial heritage, and instead valued the idea of a nation or national framework as ‘a self-conscious cultural entity’ as noted above.⁴ As for the influence of racial components on English art, for instance, Pevsner asserted that ‘racial origins help little’ (Pevsner 1956: 184). Taking the case of eighteenth-century English painter William Hogarth as a notable example, he stresses in *The Englishness of English Art*, referring to Dagobert Frey’s mention of Hogarth, that ‘it is rare that in an individual artist his racial status is of use in explaining his art’ (Pevsner 1956: 184), and that the racial status of Hogarth, of whose Englishness ‘there can be no doubt’ (Pevsner 1956: 20), does not explain his art at all; for ‘his name is Saxon (hog-herd), but the place of his origin in Westmorland is “an area of the Celtic retreat”, and his anthropological type and that of his sister are “in the direction of an anglo-mediterranean type on a Celtic-West English-Welsh substratum”’ (Pevsner 1956: 184).

By refusing to consider racial status in discussion of the national character of a community as ‘a self-conscious cultural entity’, Pevsner held that a

geography of art is still a valid art-historical method/approach in an age of rapid communication. No matter how globalized the world would become, with various wireless communication tools keeping 'everyone all the time in touch with all other parts of the world' (Pevsner 1956: 11), and no matter how powerful a force science would become in society, divisions between nations as self-conscious cultural entities would not and will not be readily dissolved.

Through 'the geography of art', Pevsner came to show his listeners and readers that the national character of art cannot be arbitrarily determined and narrowly defined in a nationalistic or racialistic way; instead, a nation as 'a self-conscious cultural entity' expresses its character in deep and diverse artistic possibilities. Such an approach is not only applicable to the art-historical study of English art and design: the validity of Pevsner's view was, as we have seen, confirmed in the state of Japanese architecture and design during the Meiji period, the age of rapid Westernization in Japan. While nationalism in artistic creativity could have been reinforced in response to foreign influence, *viz.*, the implacable impact of artistic/design activities in Western countries, what many Japanese architects and designers in those days actually came to realize was the diversity of creativity that in fact lay within their geographical-national framework, from rigorous imitation of Western architecture and design and eclecticism in both Japan and the West to aesthetic nationalism driven by a national/racial consciousness, all in search of design (whether architectural or industrial) inherent in Japan. The essence of 'the geography of art' in the context of modern Japanese design, as with the Englishness of English art that Pevsner observed, was that the Japaneseness of Japanese architecture and design was not and need not be arbitrary.

Conclusion

Pevsner maintained that one merit of history was and is that 'it tells us how great men have acted under certain circumstances' (Pevsner 1966).⁵ Pevsner acknowledged the role that knowledge of the past can play in development in contemporary society. Today, living in an even more globalizing age, which is, in some ways, more racialistically orientated than that of 1955–1956, when Pevsner first introduced his idea of 'the geography of art' in his own version of the historical study of English art and design, we see the rapid rise of multi-racial communities and societies within geographical-national frameworks everywhere. In such an age as our own, art/design historical enquiry based on a geographical-national framework or on Pevsnerian art geography, which evokes the character of the geographical-national framework of a cultural entity, not of a racial community, is an approach more crucial than ever to be employed in the historiography of art, architecture and design. This approach shuns the negative baggage of racial consciousness in favour of untrammelled creativity

in ‘a self-conscious cultural entity’. It stands aloof from racial conflict and is free from the anathema of ultra-nationalism and racialism.

Notes

1. For Tatsuno’s own view on the elements that influence the formation of the national architectural style of Japan, see e.g., Tatsuno (1990: 402–405).

2. The ‘living national treasure of Japan’ is governmental recognition of someone as an individual with intangible cultural skills, in accordance with the provisions of The Act on Protection of Cultural Properties of Japan.

3. In 1912, for instance, Kenkichi Tomimoto published an article on William Morris in *Bijutsu Shinpō*, consisting of two parts. See Tomimoto (1912a; 1912b).

4. Inevitably, it is totally anachronistic to aspire to found a sovereign state for one race whilst taking no account of the significance of cultural and/or religious values and being insensitive to human rights. In the region of East Asia, Communist China’s insistence on Chinese ethnocentrism at the expense of multi-racial, democratic, independent Taiwan and the rise of nationalism and ethnicism in Japan are twenty-first century cases in point.

5. In 1966, Pevsner made conference notes on the meaning of teaching art history in schools and colleges of art, adding some further handwritten notes to a handout which he had earlier prepared for a meeting of the ‘Art History and Liberal Studies’ panel of the National Council for Diplomas in Art and Design (NCDAD). The notes are now held in the special collections of the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA, USA (Nikolaus Pevsner Papers: Box 21, Folder 7).

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