

# Visual Culture Japan – Scotland

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I am honoured to speak again in Yamaguchi. When I was invited to Yamaguchi in 1995 I spoke about Patrick Geddes as a visual thinker, particularly with respect to the valley section and the notation of life. Geddes's visual thinking will again - of course - be central to my theme here, but my emphasis will be to consider his advocacy of visual art from the perspective of his concern for international cultural renewal.

I want to begin with an example of Geddes's use of art in the cause of cultural revival in Edinburgh in the 1890s. This is *The Awakening of Cuchullin* by John Duncan, which is the starting point of a mural scheme for Geddes's student hall of residence at Ramsay Lodge. It shows the awakening of a Celtic hero from a restorative sleep, his wounds healed after battle. The opportunity for fully appreciating its cultural revival significance is to be found in the mural border in the illuminated quotation: 'As it hath been so it shall be'. This is a contraction of a passage from the Bible: 'The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be ...' These words resonate not only with the cyclic aspects of Geddes's thinking, but also with another revival-implying verse being used by Geddes at the time. This is a poem attributed to the sixth-century Celtic saint, Columba, which concludes 'But ere the world come to an end / Iona shall be as it was'. The poem would seem to be directly relevant here, for it was quoted in 1895 by Geddes in an essay in his magazine *The Evergreen*. That essay had the strongly cultural revivalist title *The Scots Renaissance*, that is to say: Scots rebirth. St Columba was a figure of great interest to Geddes's circle, the more so because the 1300th anniversary of his death fell in 1897. The restoration of his Cathedral on the sacred island of Iona began in 1899, and can be seen as part of the cultural renewal in Scotland during this period. I do not have space here to discuss the whole mural series in detail, but it progresses from the symbolic exhortation to cultural renewal and revivification, represented by the awakening of Cuchullin, via images of pre-Christian and Christian legend, through a transition from critical theology to academic discourse of an identifiably modern type, until it culminates in a mural of *The Admirable Crichton*, an image of action and youthful scholarship. Crichton, born in 1560, was the archetype of the young Scottish and European Renaissance scholar, and is shown here, as the guidebook notes, as representing both 'thought and action'. His inclusion strikes a personal note for Geddes, for he is reputed to have been educated at Geddes's old school, the Grammar School of Perth, and at St. Andrews University with which, as professor of Botany at University College Dundee, Geddes was currently linked. This is thus very much a visual manifesto of cultural renewal fit for the common room of an academic hall of residence.

It will be clear already that these images of national are strongly international in ethos. This international ethos was shared by the artists of Geddes's circle. One can see these clearly in *The Evergreen*. Along with the influence of the ancient Celtic art of Scotland and symbolist

developments in France, another profound artistic influence was, of course, Japan. One image, *Madame Chrysanthème*, by E. A. Hornel, is based on direct experience, for Hornel had visited Japan along with his friend George Henry, in 1893-4. In 1890 these two artists had collaborated on a pioneering image of the Celtic revival in Scotland, *Druids bringing in the Mistletoe*, and their work as a whole thus indicates the closeness of interest in matters Celtic and Japanese among Scottish artists. In many Evergreen images a formal debt to Japan is clear, notable here is Robert Burns's *Natura Naturans* which draws on European symbolism but at the same time makes direct reference, particularly in its approach to wave forms, to the style of Japanese printmakers such as Hokusai and Hiroshige.

What I want to emphasise here is that this period of Geddes's activity towards 1900 reflects his increasing internationalism, and his increasing awareness of cognate concerns about cultural revival in other countries. Of particular importance here for Geddes were developments in India, and India at this time acted as a point of cultural reference not just for Patrick Geddes but also for Japanese thinkers and artists. Thus although - so far as I know - the direct links between Japan and Geddes seem to have been made on the planning side rather than the art side, there are interesting visual arts links not only in terms of direct contact and influence, but also in terms of links mediated by India, and it is to Geddes's Indian links that I now turn.

Writing about Patrick Geddes's educational activities at the universal exhibition in Paris in 1900 his friend James Mavor notes the presence in Geddes's circle of Swami Vivekananda and his disciple, the Irishwoman Margaret Noble, better known as Sister Nivedita. Seven years earlier at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago Vivekananda had shifted perception of Hinduism by presenting it 'to the world at large as a major religion, emphasising its antiquity.' Indeed, taking his lead from the ideas of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda articulated the case for Hindu revival. In Paris in 1900 he lectured on Indian art, rejecting theories of Hellenistic influence and underlining the independent value of the early Buddhist art of India. In due course Sister Nivedita was to develop this position as was, in a more systematic way, another of Geddes's friends, Ananda Coomaraswamy. Vivekananda died in 1902, but Nivedita continued to be one of Geddes's valued intellectual allies up until her death in 1911.

In a memoir of Nivedita printed in *The Sociological Review* in 1913, Geddes recalled their first meeting in New York and how it 'continued into intimacy and collaboration during the following summer, at the meeting of the International Association which became the Summer School of the Paris Exhibition of that in many ways memorable year.' Nivedita had much in common with Geddes. Both complemented their dedication to cultural revival with a passionate interest in new educational methods, indeed prior to her involvement with Vivekananda, as Margaret Noble she had been a respected advocate of the methods of the educational reformers Pestalozzi and Froebel.

The link between Geddes and Nivedita thus places in close touch with one another a central figure of the Celtic revival in Scotland and a central figure of the Hindu revival in India. Nivedita's closeness to Geddes's thinking is clear from her book *The Web of Indian Life* which was published in 1904: 'The foundation stone of our knowledge of a people must be

an understanding of their region. For social structure depends primarily upon labour and labour is necessarily determined by place. Thus we reach the secret of thought and ideals.' Nivedita's commitment to the principles of place, work and folk, and Geddes's associated notion of regional survey, could hardly be more emphatic. She makes her personal debt to Geddes clear in an epigraph in which she thanks Geddes, who, 'by teaching me to understand a little of Europe, indirectly gave me a method by which to read my Indian experiences.'

It is noteworthy that Geddes's whole contact with Nivedita took place before he went to India himself. This serves to emphasise that, regardless of whether he had in fact visited a place, Geddes's commitment was to traditional revivals world-wide, and that he recognised from the outset that his own activities in Scotland were just one local and national expression of an international movement.

Another of Geddes's key Indian contacts was the cultural revivalist poet and educator Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore wrote the introduction to the 1918 edition of Sister Nivedita's influential book, *The Web of Indian Life* and that introduction has a distinct relevance from the perspective of cultural renewal. It is an assertion of Nivedita's significance in the struggle against what Frantz Fanon, in a later colonial context, was to call 'inferiorism'. Although, as Tagore notes 'our critics not only have the power to give us a bad name, but also to hang us', the essence of inferiorism lies not in the direct power of the oppressor, it lies in the adoption and indeed advocacy of the values of the oppressor by the oppressed, and the simultaneous rejection by the oppressed of their own values and culture. Thinkers such as Tagore, Geddes and Nivedita resisted such oppressive cultural dynamics, and it is in this context that for Tagore, Nivedita 'uttered the vital truths about Indian life.' In a Japanese context, a leader of this resistance was Nivedita's friend the remarkable Okakura Kakuzo, of whom more in due course.

Published along with Geddes's memoir of Nivedita in 1913, Tagore's own memoir of this remarkable woman recalled her versatile, all-round genius. He characterised her as a Mother of the People, noting her uniqueness in this respect. That last phrase brings to mind one of the seminal images of the revival in Bengali painting, *Bharat Mata* or *Mother India* painted in 1905 by Rabindranath's nephew Abanindranath Tagore. It is a crucial image in the regeneration of Indian art. In political significance it relates to the nationalist unrest which followed the politically motivated partition of Bengal the same year. Iconographically it is something of an analogue of John Duncan's *Awakening of Cuchullin*, or perhaps even more of his *Anima Celtica*, both works produced from a cultural nationalist standpoint as part of Geddes's Edinburgh activities a decade earlier.

Partha Mitter has pointed out that: '*Bharat Mata* was personified as a Bengali woman holding four symbolic objects in the conventional manner of a Hindu deity' but that the objects themselves were not conventional and 'were emblems of nationalist aspiration towards economic and cultural self sufficiency' representing food, clothing, secular learning and spiritual knowledge.

John Duncan's *Anima Celtica* shares this female personification of nation, and where Tagore invokes the past through the traditional pose of his figure, Duncan invokes it through direct

antiquarian reference, both through material culture and legendary imagery. Where Tagore invokes the future through symbolic objects, for Duncan, and by extension, for Geddes, future is a book ready to be opened. This conjunction of mother India and the soul of the Celt is informative.

It is important not to force the comparison here, but it is equally important not to avoid it. My aim here is not to draw a causal connection but to give context. The pages of *The Studio*, for example, would have acted as a link between the circles of Abanindranath Tagore and John Duncan. In 1897 there had been extensive coverage of Duncan's Celtic revival murals in Edinburgh. In 1903, E. B. Havell gave notice of the new movement in Indian art in the same journal. Havell had been appointed superintendent of the Government School of Art in Calcutta in 1896. In his 1903 paper he takes pains to introduce Abanindranath Tagore's work. In July 1905 *The Studio* published a full-page colour reproduction of Abanindranath Tagore's *The Banished Yaksha* as a frontispiece and in 1908 Havell's definitional article on the Bengal school was published. That included a reproduction of Tagore's crucial image of *Bharat Mata*. Also illustrated was work by Nanda Lal Bose and Surendra Nath Ganguly. Havell uses the analogy of Roman domination of Celtic Britain to make his views of the inferiorisation of Indian culture clear. He comments further, in a manner worthy of Fanon that the British had 'been civilising India in the same way for more than fifty years,' and had 'succeeded in persuading educated Indians that they have no art of their own, though the evidences of its existence are many and great.' And again, with respect to how this situation might be changed: 'After some years, when the personnel of the Committee had gradually changed, and an infusion of Celtic blood had raised its artistic standard .... I ventured to propose that the old collection of European pictures should be sold ...'. This statement is illuminated by the company it keeps in *The Studio*. The issue begins with an account of the etchings of D. Y. Cameron by Frank Rutter. Cameron was soon to provide the frontispieces for the uniform edition of the works of Fiona Macleod (William Sharp) many of which had first been published by Patrick Geddes and colleagues in Edinburgh in the mid-1890s. Towards the end of the same issue is a careful reproduction of a Japanese print, *The Iris Garden*, by Kiyonaga, which is introduced as 'the first of a series of reproductions of notable Japanese colour-prints' to be issued by *The Studio* 'from time to time'. Thus Indian art is given context by the Scottish and the Japanese.

The same year saw the publication Havell's book, *Indian Sculpture and Painting*. Havell thus provided institutional support underpinned by critical historical vision for the new painters. Tapati Guha-Thakurta has noted that Nivedita's review of this book in 1909 was 'certainly as important for Indian readers as the book itself.' And with respect to the development of the appreciation of this Indian visual art Nivedita was much more than simply a reviewer of Havell's book. She had been a primary source of inspiration and guidance for Abanindranath Tagore throughout his mature development as an artist. In her activities as an art critic she helped to clear and maintain the path that the Bengal school of painters were to follow. Crucial here, and of particular interest in the context of this paper, was Nivedita's link with the Japanese art critic and teacher, Okakura Kakuzo. Thus just as Geddes's work in Scotland must be seen in a pan-Celtic context, so the activities of Nivedita must be seen in a pan-Asian context, strongly influenced by Okakura. If pan-Asianism has a defining moment it is

the visit of Okakura to Bengal in 1902. He had come with the intention of visiting Vivekananda but this was prevented by Vivekananda's untimely death. Okakura was introduced to the Tagore family by Nivedita, and in due course completed his seminal book *Ideals of the East: with Special Reference to the Art of Japan* while staying as a guest of Surendranath Tagore. Surendranath Tagore was brother to the painter Abanindra and nephew of the poet Rabindranath.

Okakura's book begins with this famous quotation, which we can regard as a pan-Asian manifesto:

'Asia is one. The Himalayas divide, only to accentuate, two mighty civilizations, the Chinese with its communism of Confucius, and the Indian with its individualism of the Vedas. But not even the snowy barriers can interrupt for one moment that broad expanse of love for the Ultimate and Universal, which is the common thought inheritance of every Asiatic race, enabling them to produce all the great religions of the world, and distinguishing them from those maritime peoples of the Mediterranean and the Baltic, who love to dwell on the Particular, and to search out the means, not the end, of life.'

Tapati Guha Thakurta points out that Nivedita acted 'as the main mediator and promoter of Okakura's Pan-Asian aesthetic, trying to harness it to the cause of nationalism and an artistic revival in India.' Indicative of this was her introduction to Okakura's book where she emphasises 'the absurdity of the Hellenic theory' of Indian artistic development noting that Okakura argues that the actual affinities are largely Chinese. Reiterating Vivekananda and clearing the way for Coomaraswamy she notes that Okakura argues that 'Greece falls into her proper place as but a province of that ancient Asia.'

Furthermore this pan-Asian culture was held to have had ancient Indian Buddhist and pre-Buddhist thought as its point of origin. Thus Indian culture, undermined by the ornamentalism (to use David Cannadine's useful term) of British rule, rediscovered itself at the centre of a pan-Asian stage. By this time Okakura had taken on the major role of attempting to balance the Westernisation of Japanese culture of the Meiji period with traditional cultural values. Okakura wrote in *The Studio* as early as 1902 of the Meiji restoration as a Renaissance that had the double task of 'returning to the classic ideals and at the same time of assimilating the new revolutionising ideas'. The problem for Okakura was to complement the 'overwhelming power of Western science and culture' with a return to classic ideas of art. To serve this end he founded the Nippon Bijitsu-In, an independent art school which through its students directly influenced developments in Calcutta. It was from this art school that Abanindranath Tagore and his Bengal-revival school took their cue, in particular from the work of Yokouama Taikan and Hishida Shunso both of whom had been sent to Calcutta by Okakura in 1903. According to Partha Mitter, 'Taikan's approach to art left a deep impression of Abanindranath'. Furthermore Taikan was very willing to explore Indian themes in his work, for example the *Ras Lila* or 'love-play' of Radha and Krishna.

At the time of her death, Nivedita was writing a book which was eventually published in 1913 as *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists*. The task of finishing the book was undertaken

by Ananda Coomaraswamy, and the book was published under both names. That publication marks a wider appreciation of the art of the Bengal school for, as it stresses on the title page, it contains thirty-two colour illustrations by 'Indian artists under the supervision of Abanindro Nath Tagore'. This was a significant exposure of the Bengal school painters for the series in which the book was published was aimed at a mass market and contained cognate titles such as T. W. Rolleston's *Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race*, published some two years earlier, extensively illustrated by Stephen Reid. The series was published in London by Harrap and it had competition in due course from a series published by Gresham, a London imprint of the Glasgow firm of Blackie, which was also to make use of Bengal school illustrations. Gresham used not only Bengal school artists in *Indian Myth and Legend*, but also, in another title, the artist used was Geddes's colleague John Duncan. The author of these books was the prolific Donald A. Mackenzie who was later to make very clear his interest in the relationship between Celtic societies and Buddhism in his speculative *Buddhism in Pre-Christian Britain*. Mackenzie connects to a later generation of cultural revivalist activity in Scotland. He was both a respected writer on folklore and a poet and he makes an appearance in the latter role in Hugh MacDiarmid's seminal anthology, *Northern Numbers*, published in 1920. That work became a foundation of the post-Geddes cultural revival in Scotland in the twentieth century.

Although Geddes's activities in India after 1914 cannot be explored in detail in the present paper it is, nevertheless, worth noting here that it in this Indian context that one finds a contact between Patrick Geddes and his friend Charles Rennie Mackintosh, which resulted in a fascinating 'almost' of world architecture, namely a building by Mackintosh in India. In addition there is a Buddhist-derived formal element involved in Mackintosh's design, which adds to its relevance here. The project got no further than Geddes's commissioning of drawings from Mackintosh, but some of these have now been identified. From a joint pan-Asian and pan-Celtic perspective what is interesting here is the influence of Indian Buddhist architecture on Mackintosh. Specifically, as Alan Crawford has noted, a direct reference to the gates of the Great Stupa at Sanchi which occurs in Mackintosh's drawing of an arcaded street front. Crawford points out that one of these gates had been illustrated in W. R. Lethaby's *Architecture, Mysticism and Myth*. But while Mackintosh's interest in Lethaby's book is well established, one should also bear in mind his keen interest in the writings of the pioneer of Indian architectural history, the Scot James Fergusson, for this would have given him an additional and more detailed source. While Lethaby provides an attractive silhouette, Fergusson illustrates and discusses these particular gates in detail in the third volume of his *History of Architecture* published in 1876 and republished to considerable acclaim in 1910. Lethaby was, of course, well aware of Fergusson's work and makes specific reference to him in *Architecture, Mysticism and Myth*.

These unrealised projects by Mackintosh can thus be seen as a contribution by the Scottish architect to the Indian cultural revival, made in the context of what has been called Geddes's 'careful attention to Indian / Hindu tradition'.

By way of conclusion, I want to draw attention to another Edinburgh link to both Indian and Japanese art. This is the work of the publisher T. N. Foulis from about 1912 to 1919. Foulis published not only work by Patrick Geddes and his Scottish associates such as John Duncan,

but also that of Ananda Coomaraswamy and Okakura Kakuzo. For example, Duncan contributed notable Celtic revival drawings to a T. N. Foulis publication of 1912. This was *The Blue Blanket*, a four part magazine described – in very Geddesian terms – as a civic review. It was inspired and probably edited by Geddes, and written primarily by Geddes and his supporters. Contributors included Marjorie Kennedy-Fraser, Ramsay Traquair, Frank Mears, A. P. Laurie, Otto Schlapp, Bruce J. Home, J. Arthur Thomson, Marion I. Newbiggin, and of course Patrick Geddes himself. One of John Duncan's drawings, *Cuchulainn*, was later used as the frontispiece of Marjory Kennedy-Fraser's second volume of *Songs of the Hebrides*. Another drawing, *Riders of Sidhe*, was a preparatory design for one of Duncan's most well known works. A further Celtic revival aspect of the Foulis list emerges with the publication of the *Iona Books* series from 1912 onwards. These books had a simple hand-made paper wrapper printed with an interlace cross design. For example Fiona Macleod's essay on Iona, *The Isle of Dreams* was reprinted as one of the *Iona Books* in 1913. Another title published that year by T. N. Foulis was *Irishmen All* with illustrations by Jack B. Yeats, the key Irish artist of his generation and brother of W. B. Yeats, the leader of the Irish literary revival. One should note here that W. B. Yeats himself had almost published a book with Geddes and Colleagues back in the 1890s, and he was also the key supporter of Rabindranath Tagore in the West during just this period. This then was the context for the publication by T. N. Foulis of Ananda Coomaraswamy's *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon* in 1913. This important popular introduction to the subject has a frontispiece of Krishna from Coomaraswamy's own collection which, I suggest, influenced John Duncan's work. Thanks to the work of Elfick and Harris much of T. N. Foulis's achievement can now be followed, but many questions remain unanswered. One may speculate, for example, that it was through Coomaraswamy's settling in Boston in 1917, to develop the Indian collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, that in 1919 T. N. Foulis became the publisher of the first solely European edition of Okakura's classic English-language statement of Japanese cultural principles, *The Book of Tea*. In terms of the cultural interaction of East and West it is worth noting that Okakura had himself been given impetus for his work by Ernest Fenollosa whom he had met in Tokyo, and whom he eventually joined in Boston at the Museum of Fine Arts. It was in Boston in 1906 Okakura's *The Book of Tea* was first published. This was described in 1989 by Shoshitsu Sen as 'a pioneering effort in the cultural bridge-building between East and West' which 'continues to surprise ... with the freshness of its insights.' Coomaraswamy certainly valued Okakura's thinking and he quotes several passages from *Ideals of the East* in his *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, published in 1916. This contained Bengal school illustrations, along with several from China and Japan. Okakura's *Book of Tea* is also interesting from the perspective of its illustrations in the T. N. Foulis edition. Artists whose work is reproduced include Korin and Soami, and several images of tea bowls are reproduced, including examples from Karatsu and Hagi.

Thus the publication of Okakura's *The Book of Tea* in Edinburgh, by a publisher who also published Patrick Geddes is symbolic for me of the global renewal of culture which Geddes advocated. It is on that note of international cultural revival and the networks associated with it - whether in Scotland, India or Japan - that I conclude. Thank you.

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