*Japan Review*, 2001, 13:107-128

# The Geography of Okakura Tenshin

Pekka KORHONEN
*University of Jyväskylä, Finland*

In his political writings Okakura Tenshin used two different conceptions of Asia: a western European one and a Japanese one. Geographically the European concept at the turn of the last century was surrealistic, meaning the immensely diverse region east of Europe itself, while culturally, economically, militarily and politically it was seen as inferior to Europe. Okakura's Japanese concept meant renaming the old Sino-Japanese Buddhist concept of the Five Indies (*Gotenjiku*) as Asia. It placed India in the middle of the world, giving a prominent place also for China, while smaller cultural entities, such as Japan, the southern islands, or Europe appeared in the periphery. The use of two very different conceptions under the same name give a dynamic dialectic on Okakura's argumentation, where he often outwardly appears to be using the European concept, while actually his thinking proceeded along the Buddhist concept.

***Keywords*** : OKAKURA, GEOGRAPHY, ASIA, EUROPE, BUDDHALAND, EAST, INDIA, CHINA, JAPAN.

Okakura Tenshin (Kakuzō) (1862-1913) is one of the most interesting figures in Japanese intellectual history, partly because much of the atmosphere of the Meiji period is crystallized in his colourful personality, and partly because he wrote well and some of his expressions have become quite famous both in Japan and internationally. Study of Okakura's thinking is relevant not only for researchers of Japanese history. The recent boom in Asian studies has highlighted the fact that outside of Europe and America actually most historical writings on Asia were made in Japan. Intellectuals in other countries were either downtrodden by the colonial experience, or simply were not interested. Starting with Rabindranath Tagore at the turn of the last century Indian authors can be found,[1] but there is very little to be found in China, for instance. If one wants to explore the historical roots of Asian argumentation about Asia, one is advised to follow the examples of Sun Ge and Sushila Narsimhan, and go to peruse Japanese sources, such as Fukuzawa Yukichi and Okakura Tenshin.[2]

Okakura's most famous expression is without doubt 'Asia is one'. It was the opening sentence of *The Ideals of the East*, first published in 1903 in Britain.[3] The problem here is its meaning: something called Asia may be one in a certain

sense of the word, but then what is this sense? What is Asia? Where does it lie? What does it contain? What kind of place is it? Actually, Okakura seems to have used two different concepts of Asia. One of them can be called the European concept, and the other the Japanese concept of Asia. They overlap, but not very much. The two Asias are really quite different places, geographically and culturally. I shall try to show in the following how Okakura would look like if he was situated among the geographic literature of his time.

## 1. OKAKURA TENSHIN AND HIS POLITICAL WRITINGS

Okakura Tenshin was both an intellectual and an administrator, whose most active period of writing coincided with the strengthening of national self-confidence in Meiji Japan at the turn of the last century. Okakura was essentially a cultural interpreter. He was in his time one of the few Japanese with wide international experience and good command of English. In such a situation it fell naturally on his shoulders to expound Japanese views of the world to various international audiences.

Okakura's parents were silk merchants in Yokohama. Okakura was thus born in the most international community in Japan at the time. In 1869 he went to a missionary English school in Yokohama. At he age of thirteen he went to college, in the institution that later became the Tokyo Imperial University, and also there he had English teachers; William A. Houghton taught him English literature, and Ernest F. Fenollosa political philosophy. Fenollosa himself researched Japanese art, and Okakura assisted him in this after 1880, when he graduated and entered the Monbushō, Japanese Ministry of Education. In 1886 Okakura was sent as member of the Imperial Art Commission to study art history and contemporary art movements in Europe and the United States. The group was guided by Fenollosa, and the visit lasted roughly a year. The trip apparently did not inspire awe in Western art in Okakura; instead, it drew him closer towards studying ancient Eastern art.

In 1888 Okakura aided in the establishment of the Imperial Art School in Ueno in Tokyo, in 1889 he became Department Head of Art at the Imperial Museum, and in 1890 President of the Imperial Art School. His policy was to concentrate on encouraging ancient Japanese art forms in the school, and in 1893 he departed to China to investigate Chinese art. However, as this was a time of rapid political changes in Japan, since 1897 it was strongly insisted that modern European methods should be taught at the Imperial Art School, and as a result Okakura resigned in 1898 both from the school and the Imperial Museum, taking part of the faculty with him. The affair apparently was quite emotional.[4] They and a number of artists established a private institution called Nippon Bijutsuin at Yanaka, near Ueno. It was dedicated to maintaining old

Japanese art forms, Fenollosa and William S. Bigelow also being members. It was by no means an ultra-nationalist institution, with foreigners sympathetic to old Japanese art playing a big part there; it was simply that Okakura with his companions found the values of old art worth defending, even though they ran counter to fashions current in Tokyo at the time. Running such an ambitious institution with little money was not an easy task, and the undertaking eventually ran aground.

In 1901 Okakura left to India with an American lady called Miss Josephine McLeod (1858-1949). In India McLeod introduced Okakura to a number of other foreign ladies resident there, and Okakura lectured for them once a week in English about Japanese art history, being probably also partly sponsored by them. One of these ladies was Sister Nivedita, originally Margaret Elisabeth Noble (1867-1911), born in the British colony of Ireland, who had become part of the Hinduist Rāmakrishna movement lead by Swami Vivekānanda (1863-1902), adopting an Indian name. McLeod introduced Okakura to Vivekānanda, and Nivedita introduced him to the poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). He lived for a time with Tagore's family. He used English in his daily life, which is an important point, because with the language came also the particular European geographic world view. Okakura was probably the first Asian intellectual who filled the concept of Asia with unwaveringly positive meanings. To do that to such a surrealistic metaphor as Asia[5] may be easier in a foreign language than with one's own, and thus the English aspect of Okakura's political writings has to be kept in mind. Equally much importance has to be placed also for his intellectual environment in India. At least once a week he was surrounded by admiring European ladies interested in the same artistic values as Okakura. Discussions with dynamic, proud, forward-looking Indian intellectuals like Vivekānanda and members of the Tagore family were stimulating, and Okakura also travelled throughout India seeing artistic and religious remains.[6]

Okakura is internationally famous for four books that he wrote in English. The manuscripts of two of them were written in India. The first book was called *The Ideals of the East*, finalized in 1902, containing in essence the private lectures given by Okakura to the European ladies. Nivedita, who later became an author of numerous books on India,[7] was closely involved in making the book. She supervised the typing, language editing and revision of the English text. She also wrote the introduction to the book.[8] It is not clear how much the final manuscript reflected her anti-British and newly Hinduist views, and this may not be a very important question; the main point is that while living in India, Okakura worked within an enthusiastic intellectual community. *The Ideals of the East* was published in 1903 in London. The audience for the book obviously was on one hand European orientalists interested in Eastern art and philosophy, and on the other Indian intellectuals. The other manuscript written in 1902, while staying

at the Tagore household, was *The Awakening of the East*, more pointedly written with an Indian readership in mind. The book contained a call for a pan-Asian alliance to oppose Europe with its depreciatory ideas and practices, but it was never published during Okakura's lifetime. It remained at the level of private thoughts known to a few Indian friends. It is not even known whether he himself contemplated publishing it or not.

Okakura returned to Japan in the autumn of 1902, trying to continue with the Nippon Bijutsuin, but the task had not become any easier. In 1904 he left to the United States, being employed as an expert of Oriental art by the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Okakura gradually started to return back to a respectable position, and his sojourn to the heart of Asia as a recluse ended. In 1906 he became curator for the museum, and started to live half of the year in Boston and half in Japan, making also various trips around the world. Eventually he returned to the Japanese academic world as a respected scholar. Even though Okakura did not publish *The Awakening of Asia*, he included elements of it in *The Awakening of Japan*, written rapidly and published in 1904 in London during the Russo-Japanese war. It was one of the main books depicting Japan's position in the conflict to an Euro-American audience. Okakura's most famous book outside Japan is *The Book of Tea*, written after the victorious war and published in 1906 in London. In these books there are interesting changes in Okakura's arguments about Asia, reflecting the place of writing, geographic framework, intended readership, and Okakura's own position in society.

Okakura did not initially command much respect in Japan. His English writings were not well known there until ten years after his death, when in 1922 Nippon Bijutsuin translated and published *The Ideals of the East*, *The Awakening of Japan*, and *The Book of Tea* for the Japanese audience, as a trilogy quite mistakenly titled the Complete Works of Tenshin. This opened the way for Okakura to gain a small amount of recognition in Japan. Things stood in this way until fifteen years later, when Okakura's texts were found convenient by Japanese ultranationalists. The handwritten manuscript of *The Awakening of Asia* was rediscovered in 1938. This was again a turn of a century. According to the Japanese imperial calendar the Western year 1939 was the Imperial year 2600, and a new magnificient Japanese century was thus beginning. A Japanese translation was published immediately in 1938, while the publication of the original English manuscript took place in 1939 in Tokyo.[9] Both versions were used by Japanese ultranationalists to whip up the idea of a pan-Asian alliance in Japan and abroad.

With Okakura one gets into same kind of problems as when one is dealing with German intellectual history. It is perhaps unnecessary to say that Okakura's relationship with Japan's ultranationalists was the same as that of, say, Friedrich Nietzsche's to German Nazis; both wrote philosophically and politically loaded texts at a certain period of time from their own personal point of view, but their

words were then used in the politics of a quite different time by quite different people. If we are going to have any sensible consciousness of the life of ideas in history, Okakura's text written in 1902 must naturally be placed in the context of the turn of the European century, not to the intellectual climate of World War II. Nevertheless, as a result of overuse during the war, Okakura's works were avoided after 1945 because the mark of militarism had been placed on them. Okakura's rehabilitation began in 1979-81, when a nine volume edition of all his books, essays, lectures, diaries and letters was published. A complete, three-volume collection of his English writings was published by the same publisher in 1984.[10] After that proper studies of Okakura and his writings could finally be made.[11]

## 2. ASIA IS ONE

Okakura always went straight to business. He started his arguments from the middle, without wasting ink on lengthy approaches or unnecessary explanations. He wrote clear arguments, which were at the same time philosophical and emotional. Especially during his stay in India he wrote from memory, with few references to bibliographic sources; *The Ideals of the East* is not a study, it is an aesthetic political program. The concept of Asia in the book reflected Okakura's association with Europeans and Indians, and cartographically it was the same as political non-Europe on the Eurasian continent, i.e. Russia was left out of it, but everything else was placed in, from the Semites and Turks on the Mediterranean coast to Arabs, Persians, Mongols, Indians, Burmese, Siamese, Chinese, Koreans and Japanese. The constitutive elements of Asia were not countries, but races. This combination of race and politics with geography was also a markedly European conception.[12]

Yet, Okakura did not completely adopt European argumentation; if he had done so, he would not have been interesting and inspirational. Okakura's Asia was composed of circles with decreasing levels of importance. Graded circles were a typically Chinese geographic concept,[13] but during the Tokugawa period these concepts became internalized in Japan in the way that in Japanese geographic rhetoric Japan replaced China as the centre of the world.[14] Also Okakura's gravitational centre was situated in Japan. He argued throughout as a representative of the Japanese race, although he was not sure about the racial origins of the Japanese. They probably had Indo-Tartaric blood flowing in their veins, but they could as well be remnants of Akkadians, Turkish hordes, or Aryans.[15] Japan could thus racially represent all the best that could be found in the Asian continent. The Japanese were in a sense more Asian than any other race, except perhaps the Koreans whom Okakura tended to count together with Japan, because the Japanese had never been conquered, had since time immemorial enjoyed the 'unique blessing of unbroken sovereignty',[16] and Japan was an insular country

that protected ancestral ideas and instincts. Japan acted thus as a living museum of Asiatic civilization, displaying pre-Buddhist rites of the Shintō with the legends that every Japanese family had descended from gods; ancient Buddhist practices that had come from India, and various traces of all of China's different civilizations under different dynasties. Asia's historic cultural wealth was thus concentrated in Japan in a pure form, protected from 'the unconscious vandalism of mercenary Europe'.[17]

Okakura's terminology displays similar amalgamation of European concepts with Japanized Chinese concepts. The term 'Asia' appears in places where Okakura wanted to say something forceful. It was a special word to be used in proclamations, but not the main geographic metaphor with which Okakura advanced his argument. Throughout the text he normally preferred the term 'East', just like in the title of the book. In the Japanese version the title was translated as *Tōyō no risō*. Nowadays *Tōyō* is often thought to be a translation of the European concept of 'Orient', but its etymological origins are quite different. It is a Japanese adaptation of the Chinese concept of *Donghai*, Eastern Sea, with which they referred most often to Japan and the Kingdom of Liuchiu, but the concept could include also Taiwan, Luzon, Moluccas and other maritime states of the southeast.[18] During the Tokugawa period Japan's foreign relations were limited mainly to China, Korea and the Netherlands, and this was also a time when interest in European cartography started to emerge. The world was basically divided into two halves, East and West, as can be seen already in Arai Hakuseki's writings. However, because Japan's foreign relations were so limited and its historical experience of countries far away rather shallow, *Seiyō*, the West, did not really point to Europe as such, but only maritime Western Europe, most of all to the Dutch, and later to the British and French. Similarly *Tōyō*, the East, referred to maritime Eastern Asia, most of all to Japan itself, but also to Korea and China, and after them to the rest of the countries about which Japan had some kind of historical records, all the way to India. There was relatively little interest in the areas of continental Eurasia that lie between *Seiyō* and *Tōyō*. One suspects that even though Okakura strove to argue with the English term 'Asia', in Japanese he was not mainly thinking with the direct loan word *Ajia*, but with *Tōyō*. His striking lack of interest in finding information about anything west of India or towards the north in the continent would support this interpretation.

Even though Okakura argued that Japan was the most Asiatic of Asian countries, he was at the same time proud of Japan's rapid rise to the rank of a modern power. It naturally entailed a deep-reaching Europeanization at all levels of Japan's society, Okakura himself being a prime example of the new cosmopolitan representatives of Meiji Japan. Economic development, military strenghening, the rise of international prestige and national self-consciousness were eminently good things. Being the nation most faithfully true to the Asiatic soul, and being

the only nation in Asia able to rise to a high rank in the European world, were not separate arguments. The point becomes clearer in Okakura's later works, but already here the idea is that successful modernization requires faithfulness to one's cultural roots. Japan had achieved this. Okakura thus definitely jettisoned the European idea, which connected Asia as an essentialistic phenomenon with cultural stagnation and inability to develop. Ancient Japanese art forms and modern textile factories could exist together without any discrepancy. The same combination had not yet succeeded in the rest of Asia, but eventually it would.

In the next circle of Asia lay Japan's cultural origins, the Chinese and Indian civilizations, the two great intellectual and artistic poles of Asia:

> The Himalayas divide, only to accentuate, two mighty civilizations, the Chinese with its communism, 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.[20]

The basic antagonistic relationship in the book was between Europe and Asia. Asia was one not only racially, but also in terms of thought patterns. Europe was different, representing a predatory, maritime culture bred on the shores of the two small inland seas. Yet, this was not Okakura's only descriptive concept. In books written by Euro-Americans the argumentation moved within the dualism of European individualism and Asian despotic collectivism, but Okakura did not accept that division. Individualism was of great value for him, and thus he placed individualism strongly in Asia as an essential Asian characteristic. Asia was actually more individualistic than communistic; of collectivistic ideas Okakura found in Asia only northern Chinese Confucianism; southern Chinese Lao Tzu and his followers represented individualism, as did nearly all of Indian civilization from the Vedas to Buddhism. Individualism, just like Christianity—as a religion inspired by Buddhism—were Indian gifts to Europe.[21]

Practically all of the book deals with Chinese, Indian and Japanese intellectual and art history. Okakura has very little to say about the rest of Asia. It does not stand there on its own terms, but only in terms that the cultural duality of China and India made meaningful. Thus, concerning Islam, Okakura says that 'Islam itself may be described as Confucianism on horseback, sword in hand'.[22] He never explains what this might mean. It does not actually mean anything, except that a verbal connection is made between Islam and Confucianism, and thus Islam could be drawn within the Asiatic unity. The same held true with the rest of the

races and civilizations on the outer circle of Asia. If Japan represented both the purest form of Asia and modern development, China and India the origins of civilization, then Islam and Mongols had to represent all other aspects of Asia, such as warfare. Recurrent war and conquest in Asia are historical facts, and thus the aspect had to come from somewhere. This is where the western and northern races find their place in the structure. Mongol and Turkish people had during various periods conquered most of Asia, moving elements of culture around the continent. Thus they had contributed something, and could be counted within the Asiatic unity, but that was all that Okakura could say about them.

It is easy to see that these thoughts were written down in India. The third circle of Asia is so thinly attached to the rest of the argument that if Okakura had written the book in Japan, he might as well have left Muslims and Mongols out. Living in India, he had to take the manifest presence of Islam and remains of the Mughal conquerors into account, and of course Islam similarly also was in the minds of Okakura's Hindu friends. In English Islam naturally was an Asiatic religion, because it was not European. All these elements went into making a Japanese argument where the essence of Asia was taken as far west as the shores of the Mediterranean, however thinly.

## 3. THE PAN-ASIATIC ALLIANCE

*The Ideals of the East* was the part of Okakura's writings of 1902 that he chose to publish. Similar argumentative elements appear also in the part that he did not publish, but there flew much more fire from his pen to the pages of *The Awakening of the East.*[23] Okakura started the book in a way characteristic to him:

> Brothers and Sisters of Asia! A vast suffering is on the land of our ancestors. The Oriental has become a synonym for the effeminate, the native is an epithet for the slave. Our lauded gentleness is the irony which alien courtesy owes to cowardice. In the name of commerce we have welcomed the militant, in the name of civilization we have embraced the imperialistic, in the name of Christianity we have prostrated before the merciless. The light of international law shines on the white parchment,—the shadow of a complete injustice falls back on the tinted skin.[24]

This was the time of unjust free trade agreements between industrialized European countries and colonized or semicolonized Asian countries; extraterrestial jurisdiction, the breaking up of China, secluded European living with Asian servants, and general contempt for anything Asiatic. The general tone of affairs can be seen for instance in an American study of Japanese and Chinese education, written at the same time as Okakura was in India. The Christian author felt

absolutely no shame in titling his book *The Educational Conquest of the Far East*, and in his preface he stated bluntly:

> The methods of campaign employed by the West against the East may be briefly described as conquest by arms, by machines, by church and by school. It is with the conquest of ideas, of mind over mind that we have to do.[25]

The idea was to root out the stagnant 'iron mould' of Confucian and Buddhist education from Asia, and replace everything with Christian inspired Western education. It was simply understood to be the moral responsibility of the civilized world, i.e. Europe and America, to transform the minds of Asians, so that they would begin to think like westerners. A conquest was going on. Western military and economic control of Asia was considered permanent, all that remained to do was to civilize the Asians, for their own good, and also for the good of the masters of the world, so that there would be no unnecessary rebellions. It was exactly this type of attitude that Okakura rose against, defending Asian values while seeing them at the same time compatible with modern development.

In 1903 Okakura himself found out one of the dark sides of being an Asian author in the western world. The London publisher of *The Ideals of the East* misspelled Okakura's name as Kakasu Okakura. The misspelled personal name appears at the front cover, title page and in the Introduction.[26] There were two reprints in 1905. In the London edition the name was corrected to Kakuzo Okakura,[27] but in the edition published in New York the mistaken name could still be seen in the Introduction.[28] This was simply unmindful carelessness in the case of an unknown exotic writer, who did not matter very much.

Japan was the only country in Asia that could be called independent, but even Japan had only recently been able to renegotiate the international treaties placed upon it during the Bakumatsu period, so that its emerging industries began to enjoy an extent of tariff protection, and Europeans no more enjoyed the liberty of being judged at their own consular courts. But even Japan had not bought these advances cheaply. They had required a war with China in 1894-95, and one of the results of the war was the slogan of Yellow Peril. The name dates from a certain painting that the German artist Hermann Knackfuß painted in 1895 at the request of the German Emperor Wilhelm II. The painting had been sketched by the emperor himself. It depicted a yellow Buddha, symbolizing the 400 million Chinese led and armed by the 40 million Japanese, rising menacingly on the eastern horizon of Europe. Wilhelm II then sent the painting to his cousin, the Russian Emperor Nikolai II. The painting became famous throughout Europe either with its German name *die Gelbe Gefahr,* or as *Yellow Peril* in English speak-

ing countries. Numerous newspaper articles were written about the theme. The slogan was accepted with exceptional vigor also on the West Coast of the United States, where white racists were fulminating against Chinese, Japanese and Korean immigrants. In Japanese the name was translated as *kōka*. What has made Okakura a classic was that he was not in any way intimidated by these kind of attitudes. They angered him, and he always answered with a frontal attack. Also in this instance he coined a corresponding counterconcept, namely White Disaster, which was translated as *hyakka* into Japanese. The White Disaster had step by step overwhelmed Asia, conquering it physically, robbing it economically, regulating it legally, wiping away its pride and moral integrity. The imitation and worship of Europe had become a natural habit of Asians, which could be easily seen on the streets of Tokyo or Calcutta, where youths were flouting the latest fashions of London. Sanskrit would be a barbarous language if it had not been connected with German, and Indian cultural heritage would evoke no praise had not Goethe or Schopenhauer admired it.[29]

Yet, Okakura did not find even this admiration welcome. He considered all western knowledge of Asia superfluous:

> But after all, what does the West know of the East? The European's claim to Oriental scholarship is shadowy indeed! Who in Oxford or Heidelberg can compete with a second rate śāstri in his knowledge of Brahminical lore? Who of Berlin or Sorbonne can compare with a third-rate mandarin in his grasp of Confucian classics? ... Some of their works may be sympathetic, all are patronizing, — not one is deep in his insight. Every new book on the East is greeted with affable pity in the country which it concerns. We may be curious about the point of view, — never about the materials or the conclusions. Yet these are the only available means of our mutual information.[30]

Okakura set here out clearly the argument that Edward Said and others would write into the theoretical concept of *Orientalism* 80 years later. The West possessed a lot of technical knowledge about Asia, enough to be able to take care of the administration of colonial possessions, but in terms of understanding of the worlds of ideas found in Asia, European scholarship was shallow. There was not much understanding even of local languages and even less perusal of original sources, so that much that was written was based on translations by natives, dubious interviews, fleeting observations of uninformed one-time travellers, and pure hearsay. Thus, by Okakura's time there had been published a considerable body of literature about Asia, but it was systematically biased and misleading. A Japanese could see that books written about Japan were mostly rubbish, and an Indian could say the same about literature concerning India, but the only source for a Chinese to obtain contemporary information about Persia, or for a Siamese

about Korea, was Western scholarship, and there was no way to relativize the misinformation contained in the books. Thus Asians in general were systematically educated to despise other Asian countries and cultures, losing also their own self-respect in the process.

Yet, because Okakura used the concept of race in its contemporary sense, he went one step further. He established a qualitative difference between Europe and Asia—just like ordinary Europeans were doing. Europeans were 'perfect strangers',[31] basically incapable of understanding 'the enigmatic Asiatic'[32], because their thought processes were fundamentally different, whereas

> The unity of the Asiatic consciousness in spirit and form is most apparent in our art whose subtle refinement far transcends the amateurish coarseness of Western creations. ... And a moment's contact with any Oriental, a single visit to any Asiatic country now, reveals once more the overwhelming fact of our irrevocable kinship.[33]

Because Asia is one, you can feel the oneness if you are an Asian, and if you go to another Asian country to talk with people there, just like Okakura himself did. Instead of a downtrodden, stagnant, colonial country, bereft of civilization, he found an intellectually stimulating, emotionally satisfying, and esthetically beautiful culture, which at the moment was under British occupation, but would not remain in that state for ever.

In Okakura's argumentation, Asian societies were based on continental agricultural economies, being as a consequence highly advanced in social culture, intrinsically harmonious and peace loving. Asian societies were individualistic because they allowed individuals to have their own creative space, as a result of which all great religions of the world, advanced social philosophies, the basic scientific notions of mathematics, astronomy, physics and medicine, as well as high class art, had all originated in Asia. European civilization, on the other hand, was based on maritime predatory economies, and its contemporary greatness owed to borrowing from Asian military and economic knowledge. European life was individualistic only in the sense of dogs snarling over bones, namely economic competition; but the market and the monotony of cheap machine-made goods actually cast all Westerners into a single collectivist mould. Europeans possessed steam and electricity, using the spinning jenny, the powerloom and the steam engine in their factories, rising to the skies in their flying shuttles, moving around the globe in their steamships and railways, disseminating information with their telegraphwires and newspapers. The West had become a huge machine producing cheap goods of all varieties, and based on collectively organized commerce it was now selling these things to Asia, which was unable to fend off the onslaught with protective duties. It was a situation of war.

Europe was a collective phenomenon. Individual Europeans, as persons, were not impressive. European power rested on their collectivist unity against Asia, and on the collective prestige Europe enjoyed in Asian minds. But there was nothing permanent in the situation. Europe itself was furnishing the tools of its own downfall. European technology and scientific inventions could easily be adopted by Asian countries, as Japan's example clearly demonstrated; European languages could be used in creating Asian unity, just like Okakura was doing (even though he finally refrained from publishing the book); and European prestige could be crushed by rising Asian self-consciousness. European arrogance could only evoke Asian resistance. Thus Okakura called for every Eastern nation to return back to its own cultural roots to search pride from there, shuffle away the European mental yoke from their minds, and then unite into a grand Pan-Asiatic Alliance[34] to drive away Europeans militarily from the region:

> And indeed what more should be needed than that dire image of Western arrogance which calls all Asia to arms? Does not every Asiatic heart bleed in the untold agony of their oppression? Does not every skin smart under the scourge of their scornful eyes? The very threats of Europe are whipping Asia into a conscious unity. She was ever slow to move her massive frame. But tomorrow the sleeping elephant may be aroused to a terrible stampede. And if 830 millions shall be arrayed in mighty wrath, the earth shall quake with each footstep, the Alps themselves shall tremble to their bases, the Rhine and Thames shall recoil in fear.[35] ... And a mighty Asiatic peace shall come to clothe humanity with universal harmony. And Europe shall receive the blessing of Asia given with a freer if a firmer hand.[36]

This was revolutionary text, pointed in its argument, rich in its metaphoric language, and strong in its emotional despair about the state of affairs in colonized Asia. Okakura turned the Yellow Peril argument into a morally legitimate, united Asian fight for freedom, extending the military campaign also to Europe itself, so that the mistaken European thought patterns could be corrected, and peace would return to the world. This is the normal way that the correction of antagonists is depicted in political literature, not at all different from Lewis' concept of the educational conquest of the Far East. It probably might have been best if *The Awakening of the East* had been published in Calcutta in 1903, so that it would have appeared in the historical and political context where it properly belonged, but the publishing of revolutionary literature is always difficult.

## 4. THE GEOGRAPHY OF CIVILIZATION

Okakura incorporated some of the arguments into his *The Awakening of Japan*[37], written in 1904 in Boston. Notwithstanding, there are marked differences in the books. Also here Okakura writes about the advent of the White Disaster and the 'Night of Asia', the unjust situation where Asia has been placed because of colonialism, but there is no call for a Pan-Asiatic Alliance against the West. The basic argument rather is explaining Japan's rapid development, even though it was a truly Asian country. The book had clear national importance, because the swaying of American public opinion concerning the Russo-Japanese war was crucial for Japan. Western public opinion regarding the war was by no means unanimous. Continental European countries officially were for the most part on the Russian side, but rising social democratic, socialist and other progressive movements rather saw Japan as the Yellow Hope against autocracy represented not only by Tsarist Russia, but also by most continental governments.[38] Within the Russian empire revolutionary movements actively cooperated with Japanese intelligence.[39] Britain was allied to Japan, and opinion there generally took Japan's side. American opinion also generally tended to favour Japan, except on the West Coast. Thus, one reason for the rapid publishing of *The Awakening of Japan* no doubt was to keep American public opinion on Japan's side in the war.

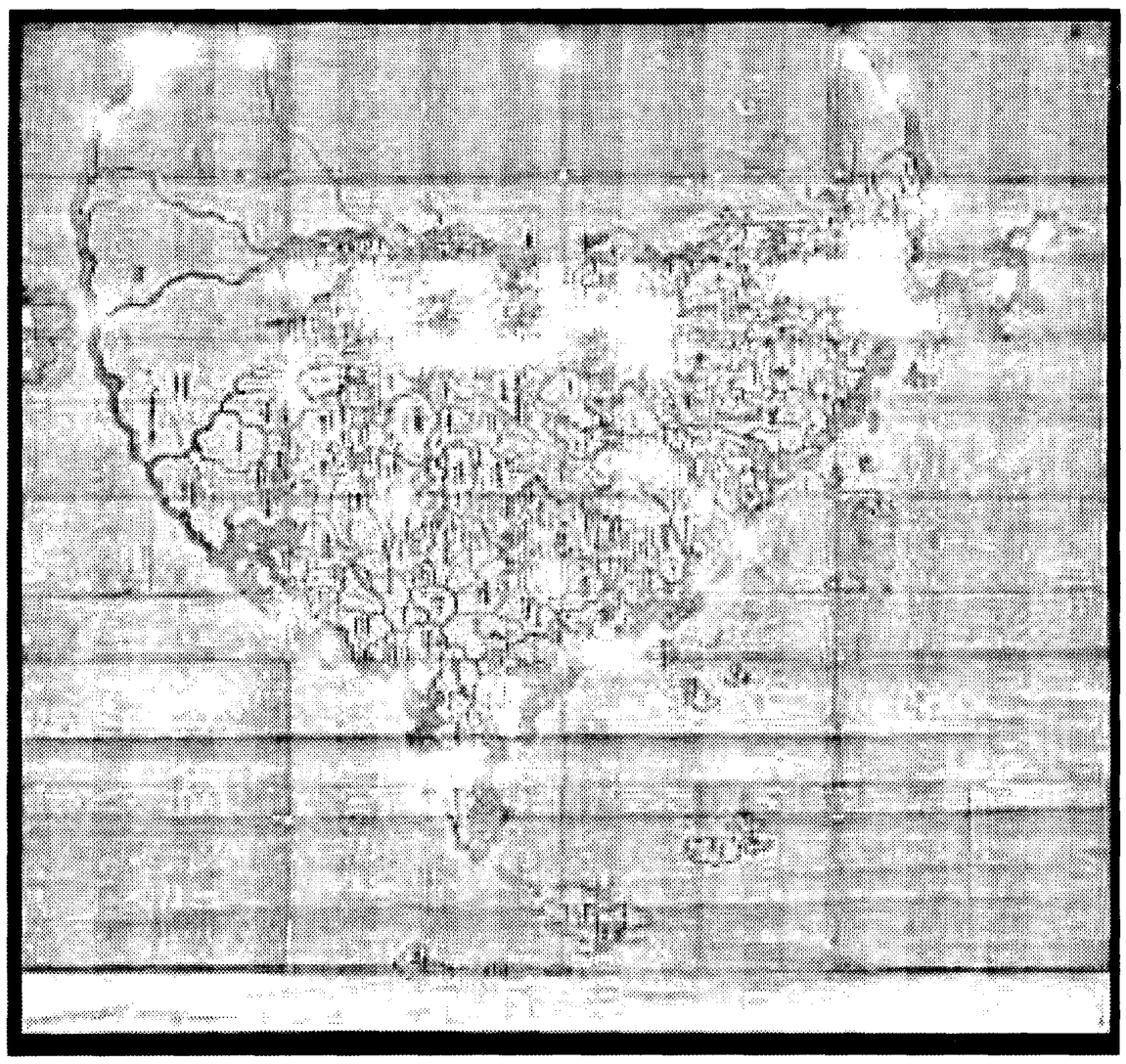
Consequently, the basic conflictual dualism in the book was not between Asia and Europe, but between civilization and barbarity.[40] The notions were used a lot by Euro-Americans, and were thus understandable to them, but they were even more typically old Chinese geographic concepts. The whole Chinese cosmography was based on the division between civilization and barbarians. China of course represented civilization and countries around it various levels of barbarity. This was the commonest political model of the world found in Chinese maps, but it was a simplified one. Even though India was far away from China and did not adopt Chinese culture, India definitely did not belong to the barbarian sphere. Instead, India was recognized as an independent centre of culture, circled by its own sphere of barbarity. Okakura adopted a similar geographic framework in *The Awakening of Japan*, namely a world composed of a few cultural centres wide apart but with links among themselves, all of them surrounded by a sea of barbarity.

The concepts of civilization and barbarity ripped the geographic notions of the previous two books asunder. Who were the barbarians in The Awakening of Japan? They were the Huns, Scythians, Mongols, especially those Mongols who professed the 'Arabian faith', as well all the other adherents to that faith, namely the Ottomans and Saracens. The fall of Asia from the highest levels of civilization became now attributed to the Mongol conquest of both China and India, and the disunity of Asia was now seen as resulting from the same subjugation. The

same elements, Islam as religion and Mongolian as race, which in the previous two books formed the outer circle of Okakura's conception of Asia, were now placed completely outside of Asia. They were described as nomadic invaders, alien, foreign and despotic elements, who came from the outside to conquer Asia, and there existed little sympathy between Asians and Mongolian invaders. Islam acted as a barrier mightier than the Himalayas between Indian and Chinese unity.

The cultural and racial geography of the landmass was thus composed of three elements: a civilized 'Buddhaland', including India, China, Japan and adjacent smaller countries at the eastern end of the landmass. In *The Awakening of Japan* this Buddhaland was synonymous with the term Asia. A civilized, Christian, and chivalrous Europe existed at the western end of the landmass. Between these two poles of civilization lied the vast regions of barbarian hordes.

The term Buddhaland is also interesting, because it is a new invention by Okakura. It was given a direct translation into Japanese as *Bukkyōkoku*, but this is quite likely a misunderstanding. We do not have to understand Buddhaland as 'Buddhist Countries', first because Okakura's term is in the singular, and second because China and Korea were at that time Buddhist countries only in a quite limited sense of the word. From India itself Buddhism had practically disappeared. There is a more logical cartographic explanation. In Japan there existed hundreds of maps depicting a place that could easily be translated as Buddhaland. The concept of Five Indies and cosmological world maps connected with it originated among Chinese Buddhists during the Tang dynasty, along with the argument that India, rather than China, was the centre of the world. The genre eventually died out in China, but lived vigorously on in Japan until the early Meiji period. Many of the maps of the Five Indies



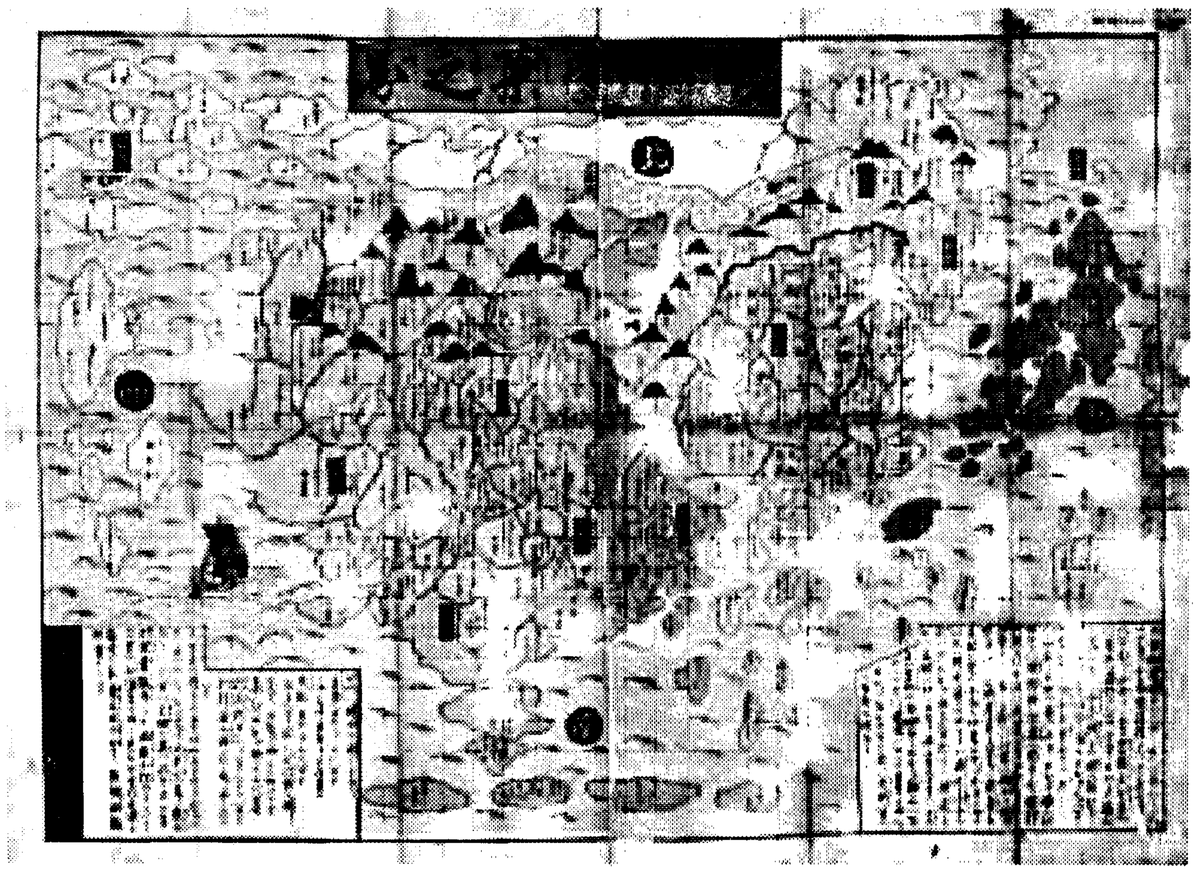
Map 1. Map of Gotenjiku or Buddhaland, called *Nansen bushū no zu*, date unknown. The map depicts the Five Indies, namely Central, East, West, South and North India. Japan, Korea and China can be seen as parts of East India towards the upper right hand corner of the map. By permission of Kyoto University Library.

(*Gotenjiku zu*)[43] were highly artistic creations, and Okakura certainly must have come across many of them during his studies of Japanese art. One of the most beautiful specimens is preserved at the Muroga Collection in Kyoto University, called *Nansen bushū no zu*,[44] but the colours have become so pale that one has to see the original to be able fully to appreciate its beauty.

As a contrast to the vast intervening belt of barbarity, the two contemporary areas of civilization were now presented as remarkably alike:

> Modern German idealism was anticipated in India many ages ago, while Christianity has many parallelisms in Buddhism. The modern European tendency toward the demarcation of the church from the state, as well as the civil-service examination system, has existed in China since early days. It was on account of these and many other points of resemblance between Western and Asiatic civilizations that Japan was able to borrow much from Europe and America without violating her sense of tradition.[45]

The Buddhaland and Europe are thus essentially similar beings, being able to understand each other, sharing similar values of freedom, education, idealism, and democracy. Yet, it is necessary to note that forms of Buddhaland culture are always presented as older than European ones. It is the basis of civilization, and Europe as a younger civilization is constructed so that it fits in with Buddhaland.



Map 2. Another Gotenjiku map, called *Bankoku shūshi no zu*, date unknown. The group of islands in the East depicts Japan, Liuchiu and Taiwan, while the Western islands probably depict Europe; at least the name of Holland is recognizable in the original. By permission of Kyoto University Library.

Europe is thus adopted into the Chinese spatial structure as an equal, although younger, member. If Japan develops rapidly, turning itself almost in a wink of an eye into a modern industrial nation, it is because Japan already was a civilized country, and had been like that for over a millennium. It is natural that Japan should develop rapidly. It was the Russians, 'sweeping down from Siberia',[46] a race born in the same steppes that bred the Goths, Vandals, Huns, Mongols,

Tartars and Cossacks, who were different. They appeared as Europeans, but in reality they were just a new form of the old nomadic menace that since time immemorial had again and again risen to threaten the two poles of civilization.[47]

We should not conclude that this change in thinking was only opportunistic, dictated by the propagandist needs of the war. Okakura was not at the service of the Japanese government at the moment, even though he wrote as a Japanese national, and a subject of the emperor. One reason is simply that the war was such an overriding practical fact that it pushed impractical concepts, such as that of a romantic Asian alliance, off the table. Another simple reason is that the book was composed in Boston, where Okakura could speak with people belonging to the European civilization, understand them and make himself understood. No qualitative civilizational difference, inhibiting communication and understanding, existed in Boston. A third reason is that the geography of *The Awakening of Japan* actually was much more natural for a representative of Meiji Japan than the geography of Okakura's Indian books. The books written in India represented a sojourn to an exiting but alien world, and Okakura evidently did not find a lasting home there.

## 5. THE POLITICS OF TEA

*The Book of Tea* was published in 1906 in London and New York.[48] It is Okakura's most loved book in Europe and America, running into numerous reprints and translations into several languages.[49] Even today, at the time of writing, Amazon.com offers for sale two different paperback versions and one hard cover version, all of them ready to be shipped within 24 hours. The book does not have immediate political goals similar to the two 'awakening' books. Most of it deals with the history and architecture of tea, the aesthetics of tea equipment and flower arrangement, the character of tea masters, and the deeper philosophy of tea. In a sense even India was dropped from the geography of tea. Buddhism was important, but mainly in its Chinese and Japanese form as Zen Buddhism, and the other important philosophy was that of Taoism; India proper was not much needed. Okakura had by now found at least two European authors capable of understanding the Asian mind. He praised Lafcadio Hearn's writings on Japan, and Nivedita's book *The Web of Indian Life*.[50] With this, nothing was left of the essential antagonism between Europe and Asia postulated in *The Awakening of the East*, although Okakura still, quite correctly, noted that most Western books dealing with Asia were rubbish. But that was a practical, not an essentialistic comment. Westerners were mentally able to understand Asia, or the Buddhaland, if they just made the effort.

The political point of the *Book of Tea* is subtler. It is a suggestion that the effort to understand is worth making. The year was 1906, the victorous war

against Russia being over, so there was no special need to dwell on the barbarian interpretation of Russians any more. Nevertheless, Okakura makes a sarcastic comment that Japan was considered as a civilized country in the West only after it committed wholesale slaughter on Manchurian battlefields.[51]

Most of the book dealt with tea. Tea was a physical representative of Asian culture, but it was also an Asiatic ceremonial that commanded universal esteem. It had spread to all the world, and changed world history. The English thirst for tea was one of the reasons why the British empire sought access to China, and American independence came after a dispute about tea taxes. Tea had also taken Asian culture with it around the world. The British use of milk and sugar in their tea, or Russian use of lemon slices in theirs, are echoes of the Chinese tea drinking habits during the Tang dynasty.[52] The afternoon tea, a practice observed around the Western world, with its specific beautiful equipment, ceremonial and atmostphere, represented Ming style of drinking steeped tea. The Japanese tea ceremony had likewise arrived from China, but it represented rather the Zen Buddhist style of the Sung dynasty. Okakura thus established tea as a symbol of high Asian culture, which had already conquered the West in its everyday form. In the rest of the book he simply invited Westerners to continue their explorations towards Taoism, Zen Buddhism, flower arrangement, and refined appreciation of the aesthetic in the every day. There were many fine things they could learn. And the fine arts of Buddhaland were preserved in their purest form in Japan ...

## 6. CONCLUSION

Okakura started his political writings in India trying to use the European concept of Asia as non-Europe, but it worked only so long as he stayed in India, and even there classic Chinese conceptions of world geography in their Japanized form tended to guide his argumentation. Later he gave up the European concept for good, and concentrated on using Chinese and Buddhist cosmology. During this process Okakura elevated the concept of Asia to the level of high culture. Even though the returned to Chinese and Chinese Buddhist conceptions of the world, he did this in English, in writings targeted to various international audiences. He gave Asia an essence, but especially in his American books it was not the essence of the Westeners, but the essence of the civilization of *Tōyō*. The reason why his books are still being sold both in the West and in the East is that he did this all with unhesitating pride in the aesthetic and philosophical values of the East. Probably the first two books were the most important in the development of this tone. Although their geographical framework was later discarded, the emotionally highly loaded style of frontal attack while making arguments was developed in them. It was later softened, and confrontational argumentation was

changed into conciliatory and persuasive argumentation in the later two books written in Boston, but pride in what he was saying remained the same. It was this pride that commands also *The Book of Tea* to be counted among political writings, instead of seeing it only as a treatise of art history.

## References


Akashi Motojirō (1988) [1906] *Rakka ryūsui. Colonel Akashi's Report on His Secret Cooperation with the Russian Revolutionary Parties during the Russo-Japanese War.* Selected chapters translated by Inaba Chiharu and edited by Olavi K. Fält and Antti Kujala, Helsinki: Societas Historica Finlandiae.

Arai Hakuseki (2000) [1715] *Seiyō kibun*, Tōkyō: Iwanami Bunko.
新井白石（２０００）西洋紀聞、東京：岩波文庫。

Benfey, Christopher (2000) 'Tea with Okakura,' *The New York Review*, 25 May, 43-7.

Carpenter, Frank G. (1897) *Asia*, New York, Cincinnati and Chicago: American Book Company.

Henderson, John B. (1994) "Chinese Cosmographical Thought: The High Intellectual Tradition", in J.B. Harley and David Woodward (eds.) *History of Cartography*, Vol. Two, Book Two, *Cartography in the Traditional East and Southeast Asian Societies*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, pp. 203-227.

Inaga Shigemi (1998) 'Okakura Tenshin, Yanagi Sōetsu, Lu Xun—Tōyō bijutsukan o megutte,' in Proceedings from the 1st Conference on East Asian Comparative Literature: Seoul: The Korea Comparative Literature Association, 125-46.
稲賀繁美（１９９８）岡倉天心・柳宗悦・魯迅—東洋美術観をめぐって、比較文学別巻、第一回東亜細亜比較文学学術発表論文集、韓国比較文学会、１２５－４６.

—— (2000) Un Destin de pensée: Tenshin Okakura Kakuzō et l'Inde au début du XXe siècle: *Les Ideaux de l'Orient* reconsidéré dans le contexte du nationalisme bengali et son oblitération posthume dans les études de l'histoire de l'art au Japon, unpublished article manuscript.

Korhonen, Pekka (2000) *Ajia no nishi no sakai*, Dai 128 kai Nichibunken fōramu, Kyoto: Kokusai Nihon bunka kenkyū sentā.
ペッカ・コルホネン（２０００）アジアの西の境、第１２８回日文研フォーラム、京都：国際日本文化研究センター。

Lehmann, Jean-Pierre (1978) *The Image of Japan: From Feudal Isolation to World Power, 1850-1905*, London, Boston and Sydney: George Allen & Unwin.

Lewis, Robert E. (1903) *The Educational Conquest of the Far East*, New York, Chicago, Toronto, London and Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell.

Matsuda Kōichirō (1998) "'Ajia' no 'tashō' sei. Ajiashugi izen no Ajiaron," in *Nihon seiji gakkai nenpō*, pp. 33-53.
松田宏一郎（１９９８）「亜細亜」の「他称」性。アジア主義以前のアジア論、日本政

治学会年報、３３－５３.

Murthy, P.A. Narasimha (1986) *India and Japan. Dimensions of Their Relations, Historical and Political*, New Delhi: ABC Publishing House.

Narsimhan, Sushila (1999) *Japanese Perceptions of China in the Nineteenth Century. Influence of Fukuzawa Yukichi*, New Delhi: Phoenix.

Okakura Kakasu (1903) *The Ideals of the East with Special Reference to the Art of Japan*, London: John Murray.

Okakura Kakuzō (1905a) *The Ideals of the East with Special Reference to the Art of Japan*, London: John Murray.

—— (1905b) *The Ideals of the East with Special Reference to the Art of Japan*, New York: E.P. Dutton.

—— (1979-81) *Okakura Tenshin zenshū*, Tōkyō: Heibonsha.
（１９７９－８１）岡倉天心全集、東京：平凡社。

—— (1984) *Collected English Writings 1-3*, Tōkyō: Heibonsha.

Okakura Koshiro (1984) 'Preface,' in Okakura Kakuzō, *Collected English Writings 1*, Tōkyō: Heibonsha, vii-ix.

Okamoto Yoshitomo (1973) *Jūroku seiki ni okeru Nihon chizu no hattatsu*. Tōkyō: Yagi shoten.
岡本良知（昭和４８年）十六世紀における日本地図の発達。東京：八木書店.

Schwab, Raymond (1984) *The Oriental Renaissance. Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Sister Nivedita of Rāmakrishna-Vivekānanda and Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1914) *Myths of the Hindus & Buddhists*, London: George G. Harrap.

Smith, Richard J. (1996) *Chinese Maps. Images of 'All Under Heaven'*, Hong Kong, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

Sun Ge (2000) 'How Does Asia Mean', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol. I, pp. 13-47, 319-41.

Tagore, Surendranath (1984) 'Kakuzo Okakura, Some Reminiscences', in Okakura Kakuzō, *Collected English Writings 3*, Tōkyō: Heibonsha, pp. 233-242.

Townsend, Meredith (1902) *Asia and Europe. Studies Presenting the Conclusions Formed by the Author in a Long Life Devoted to the Subject of the Relations between Asia and Europe*, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, and London: A. Constable.

Zhang Xie (1985) [1617-18] *Dongxiyang kao*, reprint, Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju.
張燮（民国７４年）東西洋考、台北：臺灣学生書局.

1. Murthy 1986.
2. Sun 2000; Narsimhan 1999.
3. In the Japanese edition 東洋の理想 (*Tōyō no risō*) the title was translated as アジアは一つである (*Ajia wa hitotsu de aru*). This sentence forms the basic public knowledge of Okakura. This book is the only one of Okakura's writings that is still selling well as a

paperback even in contemporary Japan, with periodic reprints by Iwanami Bunko. *Tōyō no risō* thus has the status of an essential classic in Japan, just as *The Book of Tea* is a classic abroad.

4. Benfey 2000.
5. Korhonen 2000.
6. See Surendranath Tagore 1984.
7. See, e.g., The Sister Nivedita of Rāmakrishna-Vivekānanda and Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1914).
8. See Inaga (2000); see also Inaga (1998), p. 126; and Murthy 1986, p. 46.
9. Ibid., p. 129.
10. I have based my analysis in the versions published in Okakura Kakuzo *Collected English Writings 1-3* (1984), Tokyo: Heibonsha, while comparing the texts with versions in *Okakura Tenshin zenshū* (1979-81), Tokyo: Heibonsha, to see how various concepts were translated into Japanese.
11. Okakura Koshiro (1984), pp. vii-ix.
12. See, e.g., Carpenter (1897); Townsend (1902); Schwab (1984).
13. Henderson (1994); Smith (1996).
14. Matsuda (1998).
15. *Collected English Writings*, p. 20.
16. *Collected English Writings*, pp. 14-15.
17. *Collected English Writings*, p. 15.
18. Zhang (1985); Okamoto (1973), p. 227, note 3.
19. Arai Hakuseki (2000).
20. *Collected English Writings*, p. 13.
21. *Collected English Writings*, p. 44.
22. *Collected English Writings*, p. 14.
23. The Japanese version published in 1938 was titled 東洋の覚醒 (*Tōyō no kakusei*).
24. *Collected English Writings*, p. 135.
25. Lewis (1903), p. 11.
26. Okakura Kakasu (1903).
27. Okakura Kakuzo (1905a).
28. Okakura Kakuzo (1905b).
29. *Collected English Writings*, pp. 136-43.
30. *Collected English Writings*, pp. 145-6.
31. *Collected English Writings*, p. 148.
32. *Collected English Writings*, p. 146.
33. *Collected English Writings*, p. 147.
34. Translated as 汎アジア同盟 (*han-Ajia dōmei*) in Japanese.
35. *Collected English Writings*, p. 160.
36. *Collected English Writings*, p. 165.
37. This book was translated as 日本の覚醒（*Nippon no kakusei*） in 1922.

38. Lehmann (1978), pp. 149-58.
39. Akashi (1988).
40. Inaga (1998), p. 128.
41. *Collected English Writings*, pp. 178-83.
42. 仏教国、*Okakura Tenshin zenshū*, p. 179.
43. 五天竺図。While *zu* means map, and *go* means five, *Tenjiku* literally means 'Heavenly Bamboo', a respectful name given by Chinese Buddhists to India. I have not found an explanation for Okakura's adopted artistic name 天心 (Tenshin). Nevertheless, because it translates as 'Heavenly Heart' or 'Mind towards the Heaven', it might not be too far fetched to connect it on one hand with *Gotenjiku* as Buddhist India, and on the other hand with the Chinese Confucian notion of Heaven (天, *tian*). The main character is the same in all of them.
44. 南瞻部洲之図.
45. *Collected English Writings*, pp. 251-2.
46. *Collected English Writings*, p. 219.
47. *Collected English Writings*, p. 264.
48. In 1922 as 茶の本 (*Cha no hon*) in Tokyo.
49. Benfey 2000.
50. *Collected English Writings*, p. 272.
51. *Collected English Writings*, p. 270.
52. *Collected English Writings*, p. 278.

## 要 旨


### 岡倉天心の地理学

ペッカ・コルホネン

英語で書いた政治的な論文に岡倉天心は二つの違う「アジア」という概念を使った。１９世紀の始めのスレアリスチック（超現実的）なヨーロッパ的なアジア概念によってアジアはヨーロッパ以東の全地域であり、文化、経済、軍事と政治の面でヨーロッパの下であった。同時に天心は古い中日仏教の「五天竺」という概念に「アジア」という名前を付けた。インドが中心で、中国も大きく、日本、南洋、欧州等がその周りにあった。文化・宗教・哲学的な概念であった。この二つの全く違うコンセプトが同時に天心の文書に「アジア」だったので、簡単に間違って解釈出来る微妙な議論が出て来た。