

## Okakura Tenshin (Okakura Kakuzo)

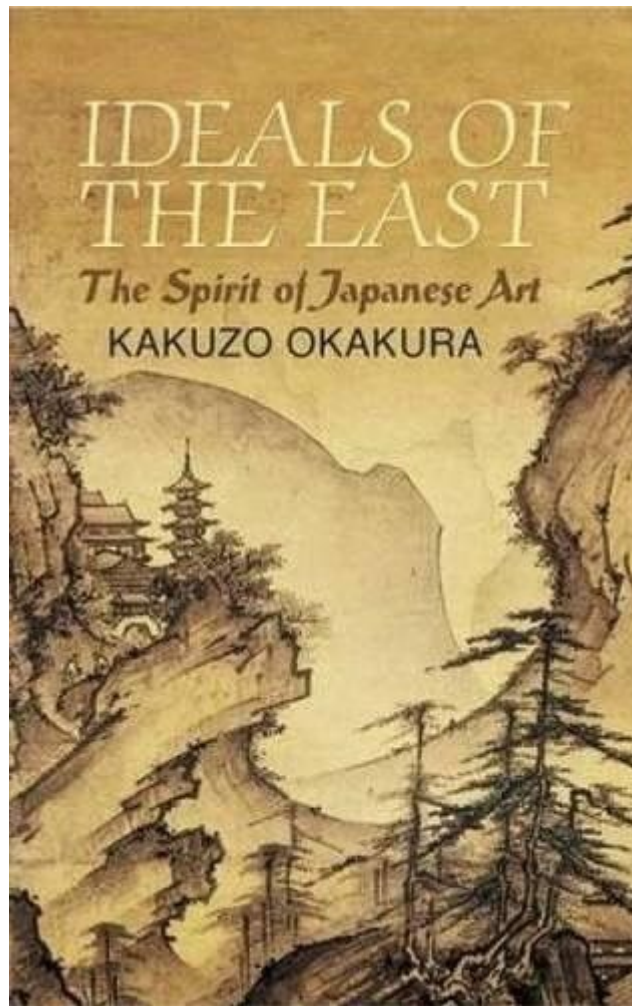
### Nakamura Fumiko

Ernest Fenollosa, known as one of the *oyatoi-gaikokujin* (foreign advisors hired by the Japanese government) came to Japan in 1878, “discovered” and strove to restore the beauty of traditional art in Japan, which at the time was being swept away by the rough waves of Western modernization. It was the young Okakura Tenshin who became Fenollosa’s right hand and committed himself to the preservation of cultural heritage. He also founded the Tokyo Fine Arts School and the Japan Art Institute where he helped cultivate innovative painters of *nihonga* (painting using traditional Japanese technique). Tenshin later moved to America where he became the first head of the Asian Art division of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. *The Book of Tea*, Tenshin’s essay introducing Japanese culture through *cha-no-yu* or teaism, published in America, is appreciated to this day by readers across the world.

In such ways, Tenshin contributed to the promotion of Japanese culture as educator and philosopher, but he always perceived Japanese culture within the context of its relationship with multiple countries and different cultures, as exemplified by his encounter with Fenollosa. Tenshin also visited India, then British territory, where he closely interacted with the great poet Rabindranath Tagore. Indeed he was a true cosmopolitan, well versed in cultures of all ages and countries.

However, his famous expression, “Asia is One” (from *The Ideals of the East*) was later appropriated to glorify nationalism and used as a slogan for Japan’s aggression policies. Perhaps now is the time to examine from multiple perspectives the ambivalence of the term “One.”

## Related Books

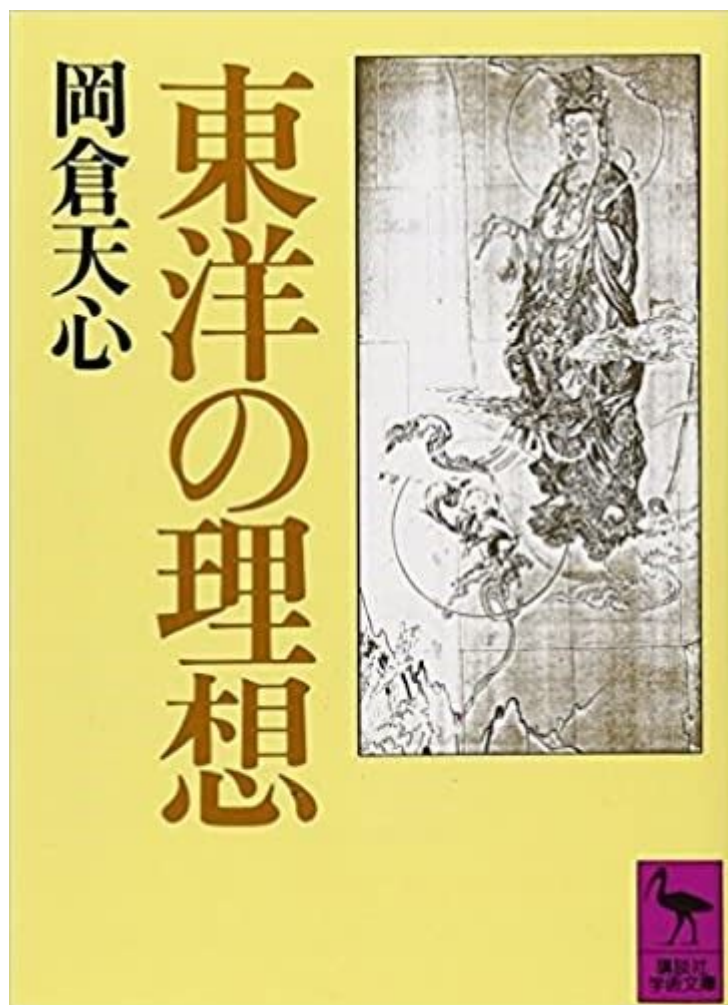


[English version]

Okakura Kakuzo, *Ideals of the East: The Spirit of Japanese Art*, 2005

Dover Publications, New York

\*The original version was published by John Murray, London, in 1903.



[Japanese version]  
Kodansha, 1986

### Related Keywords

Tokyo Fine Arts School