DRAWN TOWARD INDIA:
OKAKURA KAKUZŌ’S INTERPRETATION OF RAJENDRALĀLA MITRA’S WORK IN
HIS CONSTRUCTION OF PAN-ASIANISM AND THE HISTORY OF JAPANESE ART

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ABSTRACT

MASUMI NINOMIYA-IGARASHI: Drawn toward India: Okakura Kakuzō’s Interpretation of Rájendralála Mitra’s Work in His Construction of Pan-Asianism and the History of Japanese Art
(Under the direction of Pika Ghosh)

The contribution of Okakura Kakuzō (岡倉覚三 also known by the pseudonym Tenshin 天心, 1863-1913) to the development of both Japanese art and the writing of its history has been the subject of prolific scholarly re-evaluation from the mid-twentieth century into the present. This study contributes to the growing literature by examining a specific aspect of Okakura’s understanding of Indian art and architecture, and its role in his conceptualization of Pan-Asianism and the shaping of Japanese national identity through art. I complicate the scholarly dialogue by introducing Okakura’s reading of the pioneering Bengali scholar Rájendralála Mitra (1822-1891), who had been hailed by the subsequent generation of Indian nationalist intellectuals as the first Indian art historian. I suggest that Okakura and his Indian compatriots embraced Rájendralála Mitra’s astute political deployment of his
scholarly work as a role model in their effort to define nationalist ideals in their particular political contexts in early twentieth-century Japan and India.
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The contribution of Okakura Kakuzō (岡倉覚三, also known by the pseudonym Tenshin 天心, 1863-1913) to the development of both Japanese art and the writing of its history has been the subject of prolific scholarly re-evaluation from the mid-twentieth century into the present.¹ This study contributes to the growing literature by examining a specific aspect of Okakura’s understanding of Indian art and architecture, and its role in his conceptualization of Pan-Asianism and the shaping of Japanese national identity through art. I complicate the scholarly dialogue by introducing Okakura’s reading of the pioneering Bengali scholar Rájendralála Mitra (1822-1891), who had been hailed by the subsequent generation of Indian nationalist intellectuals as the first Indian art historian. I suggest that Okakura and his Indian compatriots embraced

¹ In this dissertation I use his family and then first name in keeping with Japanese convention.
Rájendralála Mitra’s astute political deployment of his scholarly work as a role model in their effort to define nationalist ideals in their particular political contexts in early twentieth-century Japan and India.

**Constructing Pan-Asianism**

Okakura’s Pan-Asianism, articulated most fully in his *Ideals of the East*, was unquestionably a critical intervention in modernizing Japanese art in the Meiji period. Yet the claim that all “Asian” cultures, despite their diversity, share a common source in ancient Indian and Chinese civilizations, and that Japan alone preserves these “Asian” cultures in its art to the present, in turn, posed many problems and questions, and received substantial criticism. Okakura’s Pan-Asianism was decades later claimed by those who created the ideology of the aggressive Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity to legitimize Japan’s invasion of neighboring Asian nations before and during World War II. Concomitantly, the scholarly assessments of Okakura’s Pan-Asianism before and after World War II differ significantly.

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2 Okakura Kakuzō, *The Ideals of the East with Special Reference to the Art of Japan* (1903; reprint, Rutland [Vt]: Charles E. Tuttle, 1970).

For example, the art historian Miyagawa Torao, without examining Okakura’s interactions with Indian nationalists at any length, alleged in 1956 that while Okakura sympathized with India under colonial rule, he shut his eyes to Japan’s colonization of Korea. Another scholarly trend defends Okakura’s Pan-Asianism by differentiating it from military imperialism. Takeuchi Yoshimi, scholar of Chinese literature and critic, re-evaluates Okakura as a romantic Idealist who criticized European imperialism and tried to save humanism. However, such post-war studies from the late 1950s to the 1970s, regardless of whether they defend or rebuke Okakura, fail to address the problems of Okakura’s conceptualization of particular relationships among regions of Asia at specific historical junctures.

These works do not account for the inevitable shifts in Okakura’s conceptualization of Pan-Asianism, as also in his


5 Takeuchi Yoshimi, “Nihon no Asia-shugi,” (1963; reprint in Takeuchi Yoshimi Serekushon vol. 2, Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Hyōronsha, 2006), 254-325. As one of many scholars who lean in this direction, Kinoshita Nagahiro reads Okakura’s phrase “Asia is one” as a poetic and ironical expression grieving Asia’s present degeneration and its lack of solidarity. This accords well with my argument that Okakura looked to Asia’s remote past to ground his Asianism. Yet, Kinoshita’s assessment of Okakura as a poet obscures the momentous political and intellectual developments in which he played a critical role. See Kinoshita Nagahiro, Okakura Tenshin (1973; reprint with additions and a new title, Shi no Meiro: Okakura Tenshin no Houhou, Tokyo: Gakugei Shorin, 1989), 267.
political positions from the late nineteenth century when he served the Meiji government to his subsequent role as cultural and nationalist leader. While his sympathy for India and call for the solidarity of Asia are the focal point in the Ideals of the East of 1903, his idealism shifts in tone as he gradually displays an explicitly imperialist attitude toward Korea in the Awakening of Japan (1904), as the Russo-Japanese War commenced, and simultaneously the process of Japanese annexation of Korea ensued.6

Diverging from the earlier assessments discussing Okakura’s collusion with Japanese military aggression, my study addresses Okakura’s view of India and its role in the formulation of his Asianism in the Ideals of the East. To re-examine the challenges Okakura negotiated in the vision of his Pan-Asianism at this historical moment, it is necessary to first ask how Okakura could possibly see a unity in the huge and diverse regions of so-called “Asia.” Why did he need to establish an Asian unity in order to write a history of Japanese art?

Okakura’s strategic deployment of the dichotomy of “the West and the East” and “Europe and Asia” in his Ideals of the

East indicates his awareness of the terms' European origins and inconsistencies in definition and their embedded political agendas. First, he explicitly rejected the term “Orient,” tōyō (東洋) in Okakura’s translation, on the grounds that it was defined by Europe, and could include Greece, which he wanted to differentiate from his category of “Asia.” Second, although the conceptual categories of “East,” translated as taitō (泰東), and “Asia,” as ajia (亜細亜) were both of European origin, Okakura devised distinctions in his appropriation of these terms. Despite the title of the book, Okakura seldom uses the term, “East,” and when he does so, it appears to be deliberately ambiguous. For him, “East” mostly refers to “East Asia,” namely

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7 For studies of historical constructions of the dichotomies, such as “the West and the East,” “Occident and Orient,” and “Europe and Asia,” see, for example, Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen, The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). They argue that the referents of “Asia,” “the East,” and “Orient” have been gradually extended eastward from a region in the east of the Mediterranean Sea or the Orthodox lands of the Byzantine and Russian churches, to the east of Eurasia in its European usage by the nineteenth century as Europe expanded its political and economic range eastward.

8 Okakura Tenshin Zenshū, ed. Yasuda Yukihiro and Hiragushi Denchu, 9 vols. (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1980), 4:259. The term “tōyō” is a Japanese appropriation of the Chinese word (東洋, dongyang, originally meaning the “eastern sea”). From the viewpoint of Chinese self-positioning as the center, the word was used almost as a synonym for “Japan.” For a discussion on these shifts in meaning and their political inflections, see Yamamuro Shin’ichi, Shisō Kadai to shiteno Ajia: Kijiku, Rensa, Touki (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001), 36. Japanese scholarship on Asia, particularly China, later re-defined studies on tōyō as its own Oriental studies. For a discussion of historical formulation of Japanese studies on tōyō, see Stefan Tanaka, Japan’s Orient: Rendering Pasts into History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
the modern nations of Japan, China, and Korea. Notwithstanding his emphasis on the connectedness of these regions with India and Persia, it is unclear whether he includes the latter in his definition of “East.”\(^9\) Therefore, Okakura eliminates many regions that have been categorized by European scholars as “non-European” on the Eurasian landmass.\(^{10}\)

He uses “Asia” most frequently in Ideals, not only to encompass a geographic range that covers today’s “Middle East,” Central, South, Southeast, and East Asia, but also as a

\(^{9}\) *Okakura Tenshin Zenshū*, 4:259.

\(^{10}\) On ambiguities in the division between Europe and the rest of the Eurasian Continent, see Lewis and Wigen, *The Myth of Continents*, 35-36.
culturally and historically unified entity. Okakura redefines “Asia” based on its putative common cultural value:

Arab chivalry, Persian poetry, Chinese ethics, and Indian thought, all speak of a single ancient Asiatic peace, in which there grew up a common life, bearing in different regions different characteristic blossoms, but nowhere capable of a hard and fast dividing-line.

By acknowledging explicitly that “Asia” was neither homogenous and internally coherent, nor territorially stable, he implicitly recognizes that it is only tenuously defined by its differentiation from “Europe.” Any attempt to imagine “Asia” as

11 The term “Asia” has been circulating in Japanese texts since the seventeenth century as, for example, in translations of European maps and books, and their Chinese translations. In turn, the usage raised rejection, acceptance, and redefinition among pre-modern Japanese scholars. For example, Kitajima Kenshin (北島見信 dates unknown), an astronomer of the Tokugawa shogunate, proposed in 1737 that Japan should establish a cartographic category that centers on Japan in addition to European definitions like Asia. In 1833, Aizawa Seishisai (会沢正志斎 1782–1863), a Confucian scholar of the Mito domain, refused to use the terms like Asia and Africa because Europeans named them from a perspective of viewing Europe as the center of the world. See Yamamuro, Shisō Kadai to shiteno Ajia, 2. By the Okakura’s time, Japanese intellectuals had accepted and understood the European term, “Asia” as a geographic entity, along with the negative connotations inextricably intertwined with it. It can be seen, for example, in a work by Fukuzawa Yukichi (福澤諭吉 1835–1901), a prominent journalist and educator, who argues in 1875, that Europe and the U.S. are the most civilized, Asia is the half-civilized, and Africa and Australia are the uncivilized. Fukuzawa Yukichi, Bunmei-ron no Gairyaku (1875; reprint Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1991), 24. Also, see Yamamuro, Shisō Kadai to shiteno Ajia, 43.

a unity was inevitably ideologically fraught at this historical moment.  

Okakura’s version of an Asian unity is most obviously troubling in his desire to foreground Japan as the leader of the unity.  

Recent scholarly attention to this question has been prolific. Lewis and Wigen, for example, argue that European categorizations of “Asia” have been historically formulated to stabilize modern Europe’s identity, The Myth of Continents, 36. Sakai Naoki also questions these categorizations and problematizes European subjectivity from a Japanese perspective. See his “‘You Asians’: On the Historical Role of the West and Asia Binary,” The South Atlantic Quarterly 99, no. 4 (Fall 2000): 769–817 and “The West—–A Dialogic Prescription or Proscription?” Social Identities 11, no. 3 (May 2005): 177–195.

I read in Okakura’s notion of “nation” racial undertones, at least in the Ideals of the East. I also try to test Benedict Anderson’s definition of nation against Okakura’s notion of the nation as the community that imagined themselves as “Yamato.” This highly ambiguous term, “Yamato,” had usually been employed in both scholarly and popular literature to refer to people under the rule of Japan’s early imperial government from the fourth century (and/or their descendants). It is, however, also sometimes used as a synonym for Japanese. What Okakura calls “Yamato” is also somewhat ambiguous. For the most part, he attempted to differentiate “Yamato” from the indigenous Ainu people of northern Japan, who were the focus of assimilation policies of the Meiji government during the second half of the nineteenth century. Okakura probably employed the term to essentialize and homogenize Japanese culture during a period in which Japan’s territorial stability was at stake due to rapid expansion. At this time Japan gained control over Hokkaido island in the North, where most Ainu live, in 1868 and disputed with Russia over possession of the Kuril islands and Sakhalin, and with China over the Ryūkyū islands (annexation in 1879) and Taiwan (annexation in 1895) in the 1870s. For discussions about the Ainu in relation to Meiji policy, see, for example, Brett L. Walker, The Conquest of Ainu Lands: Ecology and Culture in Japanese Expansion, 1590–1800 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); David L. Howell, Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth-Century Japan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Richard M. Siddle, “The Ainu: Indigenous People of Japan,” in Japan’s Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity, 2nd ed., ed., Michael Weiner (New York: Routledge, 2009), 21–39. Also see Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, revised ed. (London: Verso, 1991), 5–7.
and art education were recognized as pivotal political institutions to transform Japan into a “modern” nation.\textsuperscript{15} Hence Okakura’s prominent roles in these institutions are critical to understanding the complex historical and political processes in which artworks and institutions mobilized the making of a modern nation. His deployment of Japanese art history as a modern academic discipline is one of the earliest interventions to shape the nation’s identity.\textsuperscript{16} As Takagi Hiroshi points out, Okakura strategically asserts Japan’s “uniqueness” in its abilities to assimilate foreign cultures as the platform for


\textsuperscript{16} Satō Dōshin categorizes the art policies of the Meiji government of this period in the following three areas: 1) promotion of Japanese art as an industry, 2) preservation of art from the past, and 3) establishment of modern educational institutions for art. As he argues, in all three aspects, Okakura played instrumental roles as the government officer specializing in art administration, art historian, educator, and art critic. See his \textit{Meiji Kokka to Kindai Bijutsu}, 25. Many studies focus on Okakura’s various roles, including Nagoya Bosuton Bijutsukan, ed., \textit{Okakura Tenshin to Bosuton Bijutsukan} (Nagoya: Nagoya Bosuton Bijutsukan, 1999); Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku, \textit{Okakura Tenshin: Geijutsu Kyōiku no Ayumi} (Tokyo: Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku, 2007); Okakura Tenshin Geijutsu Kyōiku no Ayumi Ten Jikkō Iinkai, ed., \textit{Ima Tenshin o kataru} (Tokyo: Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku Shuppankai, 2010).
framing Japan’s national identity and Pan-Asianism. Therefore, all Asian cultures serve as sources of Japanese art and its national identity in Okakura’s vision of Pan-Asianism.

This move can be interpreted as Okakura’s response to the prevailing European view of Japanese art as a minor follower of Indian and Chinese art. The German art historian, Wilhelm Lübke’s 1868 *History of Art*, for example, which Okakura likely studied, situates Japanese art as “a branch of Indian art” with emphasis on Japan’s Chinese links. Lübke also declares that Japanese painting produced excellent imitations of nature, but not an “expression of an idea” or “artistic feeling.”

Likewise, James Fergusson’s *History of Indian and Eastern*

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17 Takagi Hiroshi, in identifying Okakura’s primary strategy as asserting Japan’s uniqueness in its abilities to assimilate foreign cultures as the platform for framing Japan’s national identity and Pan-Asianism, does not locate Okakura’s position in its intellectual context. It was shared among Okakura’s contemporaries, such as Kuki Ryūichi, Okakura’s superior and director of the Imperial Museum, who made a similar statement in his preface to *Kōhon Nihon Teikoku Bijutsu Ryakushi* (originally published in French in 1899: reprint, Tokyo: Ryūbunkan, 1912), preface, n.p. Since the two worked very closely, it is obviously difficult to attribute the statements that resonate across their writings to the one or the other. Takagi, “Nihon Kindai no Bunkazai Hogo Gyōsei to Bijutsushi no Seiritsu,” in *Ima, Nihon no Bijutsushi-gaku wo furikaeru*, 13-21.


The 1876 edition, which Okakura consulted, did not devote a chapter to Japanese architecture. Rather, Fergusson assumes foreign origins for Japanese architecture and, tucking the discussion in a section on Chinese architecture, does not recognize any “true” artistic value in Japanese buildings. Even though Japanese art objects were rapidly becoming items of popular consumption in Europe, Japanese art thus remained valued less than Indian or Chinese art in contemporary European scholarship.

In marked contrast to these texts that may have provided Okakura source materials, he depicted ancient India and China as two fundamental sources of cultural inspiration, and Japan as not their imitator but their sole heir. Among many

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22 Satō Dōshin analyzes the outflow of Japanese art to Europe and the U.S. and sees its peak in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. See his *Meiji Kokka to Kindai Bijutsu*, 112-118.

23 The resonance of this historical scheme with versions of European art history, in which Western Europe positions itself as an inheritor of ancient Greco-Roman civilizations cannot be ignored. As Dipesh Chakrabarty argues, for historians in the modern era, the subject of history is always Europe, and therefore histories of any non-European nations are inevitably a variation of the master-narrative of European histories. Okakura’s narrative attempts to place Japan in a subjective position. See Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History,” in * Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 27.
heterogeneous Asian cultures, Okakura chooses these two, which European scholars also identified as the sources for Japanese art, but redefines Japan’s position from passive recipient to an active agent in the selective appropriation of foreign elements.\(^{24}\) Published in London, *The Ideals of the East* was clearly aimed to address an English-speaking readership.

Okakura’s assertion of specific artistic relationships with India was a distinctive choice made in the Meiji period, contingent upon emergent nationalist politics. While China had played an important role for Japan as a cultural and political model in Japanese scholarship for centuries, India, called “Tenjiku” in pre-Meiji Japan, had only been recognized remotely, primarily as the Buddha’s birthplace.\(^{25}\) In making this choice Okakura departs from the position taken by many of his


\(^{25}\) Confucianism, for example, has been studied in Japan from as early as the sixth century. Specifically, a school of Confucianism established by Zhu Xi (1130-1200), a Confucian scholar of Song China, prevailed in Japan, and in the seventeenth century, the Tokugawa shogunate advocated this school of learning. For discussions of Confucianism and Japanese politics, see, for example, Peter Nosco, ed., *Confucianism and Tokugawa Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984; reprint, Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1997); Kurozumi Makoto, “The Nature of Early Tokugawa Confucianism,” trans., Herman Ooms, *Journal of Japanese Studies* 20 no.2 (Summer 1994): 337-375; Watanabe Hiroshi, *Higashi Ajia no Ouken to Shisou* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1997); Kurozumi Makoto, *Kinsei Nihon Shakai to Jukyou* (Tokyo: Perikansha, 2003).
contemporaries. He turned to India rather than China as many of his predecessors and contemporaries did, likely because China had already denounced as degenerate in the present, and the target of Japanese military ambition. Further in constructing a historical continuity with India he sets himself apart from a second intellectual political trend, namely that of positing a “pure” Japanese past, grounded in Shintō. This move distinguishes Okakura from these contemporaneous approaches toward seeking Japanese identity and remains his most significant contribution.

To identify India as an artistic source for Japan, Okakura had to further substantiate that religious connection between India and Japan as an artistic link. Okakura attempted this transformation in his narrative in part by reshaping Japanese understanding of the European category of “art.”

**Bijutsu: Establishing Equivalence**

Recently scholars have traced the complex political, cultural, and historical processes through which the concept of “art” was imported from Europe by the Meiji government. Officials had coined the term *bijutsu* (美術), literally
techniques of beauty, in 1872 to approximate the German Schöne Kunst, or the English “fine art,” when they began planning exhibitions for participating in the Weltausstellung in Wien (Vienna Exposition) of 1873.\(^{26}\) The Government explained its position, “In the West, music, painting, techniques of making images, and poetry are called bijutsu.”\(^{27}\) First used to mean today’s “arts,” the term bijutsu was gradually refined to mean “visual art” through its usage in classification of museum collections and exhibitions.\(^{28}\) Japanese official rhetoric thereby realigned its traditional classification of artifacts for art appreciation to establish an equivalent category to the

\(^{26}\) The word first appeared in an ordinance issued by the government when calling for a submission of artifacts to be exhibited in this exposition. For the process of the adaptation of the phrase “fine arts” and its institutionalization, see Kitazawa Noriaki, Me no Shinden, 140-155.

\(^{27}\) “Uin-fu ni oite kitaru 1873-nen Hakurankai o Moyosu Shidai,” an ordinance issued by the Cabinet, 1872, quoted in Kitazawa, Me no Shinden, 143. The “techniques of making images” could mean both painting and sculpture. However, since painting is mentioned specifically, I understand the phrase as meaning sculpture.

\(^{28}\) Kitazawa argues that the distinction between bijutsu (“fine art”) and geijutsu (“arts”) was ambiguous during the formative phase of the 1870s. During the 1880s, bijutsu was gradually differentiated from geijutsu to accord with European terms such as Buldende Kunst and beaux arts through its use in the governmental institutions. By 1889, bijutsu became a branch of geijutsu, and was recognized as visual arts, and music and poetry were excluded from the category. See Kitazawa, Me no Shinden, 282-285.
articulate canon being formulated in Europe. The “techniques of making images,” which meant sculpture here, was now included in this new category of bijutsu. Despite initial confusion among artists, artisans, connoisseurs, and consumers, the word, and the sub-categories under this umbrella term, were rapidly absorbed into newly established Japanese art institutions.

29 Ogawa Hiromitsu argues that although the traditional East Asian category of shoga (calligraphy and painting) was replaced with European fine arts in the early Meiji period, it was the long and creative traditions of shoga that made this rapid transition possible. See his “Shoga to Bijutsu: ‘Ima, Nihon no Bijutsushigaku o furikaeru’ Kokusai Kenkyū Happyō-kai ni yosete,” Bijutsushi Ronshū 14 (1998): 157-166.

30 Significantly, calligraphy was excluded from this category, which caused some confusion. Okakura, for instance, defended calligraphy as one branch of bijutsu. For his debates with Koyama Shōtarō, an early oil painter who denied the artistic value of calligraphy, see for example, Niigata Kenritsu Kindai Bijutsu-kan, ed., Koyama Shōtarō to “Sho ha Bijutsu narasu” no Jidai, the exhibition catalogue (Nagaoka: Niigata Kenritsu Kindai Bijutsu-kan, 2002). Decorative objects, such as lacquer-ware and metal-ware, were also ambiguously defined as “bijutsu-kougei (美術工芸 craft art).” While Okakura’s “Nihon Bijutsu-shi” excluded decorative objects, Köhon Nihon Teikoku Bijutsu Ryakushi, the first official Japanese art history published by the government in 1899, included them as “美術的工芸 (artistic crafts).” See Teikoku Hakubutsukan, ed., Köhon Nihon Teikoku Bijutsu Ryakushi (originally published in French in 1899: reprint in Japanese, Tokyo: Nōshōmu-shō, 1901). For a discussion of the ambiguity of classification for decorative objects, see Satō Dōshin, “Nihon Bijutsu” Tanjō: Kindai Nihon no “Kotoba” to Senryaku (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1996), 54-66. Today, both calligraphy and crafts are included in kokuho (国宝 national treasures), important cultural properties registered by the government. For a discussion of the formation of the kokuho administration of the Meiji government, see Christine M. E. Guth, “Kokuho: From Dynastic to Artistic Treasure,” Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie 9 (1996-1997): 313-322.

31 For artifacts that were ambiguously classified as or excluded from fine art categories in this period, see Hyōgo Kenritsu Kindai Bijutsukan, ed., Nihon Bijutsu no 19-seiki (Kōbe: Hyōgo Kenritsu Kindai Bijutsukan, 1990).
The Meiji move to situate religious icons as works of art in the late nineteenth century constitutes one of the major strands in the story of Okakura’s search for cultural origins in India. In pre-Meiji Japan, art appreciation had focused mostly on shoga (書画 calligraphy and painting), based on the Chinese categorization of artifacts. This emphasis laid the foundation for the practice of writing about secular painting (gashi, 画史 history of painters), focused on painters’

32 On the complex processes whereby Buddhist statues were transformed into works of art, see for example, Asai Kazuharu, “Butsuzō to Kindai,” in Nihon no Bijutsu, no. 456 (May 2004):87-98 and Kinoshita Naoyuki, Bijutsu to iu Misemono: Abura-e Jaya no Jidai (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1993), especially 15-38.

33 Utilitarian objects produced with masterly skills and decoration were also the object of appreciation in pre-Meiji Japan. For example, they were included in the 88 volumes of Shūko Jisshu (集古十種), a collection of illustrations of objects with exquisite craftsmanship, published in 1800 by Matsudaira Sadanobu (松平定信 1758-1829), a senior councillor of the Tokugawa shogunate. It has sections for “inscriptions,” “arms,” “musical instruments,” “stationeries,” “old portraits,” “calligraphies,” and “famous old paintings.” For more information on Shūko Jisshu, see, for example, Kobayashi Megumi et al., ed., Shūko Jisshu (Fukushima: Fukushima Kenritsu Hakubutsukan, 2000).
biographies, and authoritative models in China. Distinct from this trend, Okakura’s “modern” Japanese art history looked for cultural origins beyond China, spurred in part by the new understanding of Buddhist icons as belonging to the emergent category of fine art. Analogous to the Enlightenment quest for origins of European art in ancient Greece, Okakura now looked to India and Indian art.

Okakura’s groundbreaking 1890 lecture “Nihon Bijutsu-shi (the history of Japanese art)” marks the transition in the appreciation of artistic objects from traditional shoga to a

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35 For example, Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) saw ideal forms in Greek sculpture, and the Society of Dilettanti (founded in 1732), a group of elite English intellectuals actively sponsored excavations and studies in Greece. In the nineteenth century, more archaeological sites were excavated by northern Europeans. For discussions on Winckelmann, see, for example, Alex Potts, Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994) and Donald Preziosi, “Art as History: Introduction,” ed. Preziosi, The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). In the scholarship on the Society of Dilettanti I have found useful: Jason M. Kelly, The Society of Dilettanti (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).
European concept of “fine art” that included both painting and sculpture.\(^{36}\) Another departure from earlier practice is indicated in his use of the word “\textit{bijutsu-shi}” to mean the history of fine art instead of \textit{gashi}.\(^{37}\)

The move to include “sculpture” had a profound impact on Japanese perceptions of Buddhist icons (mainly Buddhist statues 仏像), which had not been objects of exclusively aesthetic contemplation until this time.\(^{38}\) In 1884, as a member of a governmental research mission, Okakura opened the Yumedono, a shrine chamber at the Hōryū-ji-temple (usually dated to the end of the seventh or the early eighth century), the oldest extant wooden structure in Japan, and “discovered” the Guze Kannon, \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsuperscript{36}} Okakura, “Nihon Bijutsu-shi,” in \textit{Okakura Tenshin Zenshū}, 4: 3-167.}}

\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsuperscript{37}} However, this does not mean that Okakura ignored traditional writings on art. In fact, Okakura frequently referred them, including \textit{Honchō Gashi}, \textit{Shūko Jisshu}, and \textit{Koga Bikō}, for this lecture. See, for example, Okakura, “Nihon Bijutsu-shi,” 72, 103, 116, 123-125, 141.}}\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsuperscript{38}} Buddhist icons were the only artifacts from the past that could be assimilated under the rubric of “sculpture.” Kinoshita Naoyuki argues that, for the Meiji governmental officers, only the Buddhist statue, \textit{Amida Nyorai} (from the thirteenth century) at the Kōtoku-in temple, Kamakura, could be considered equivalent to European monumental sculpture, and that they exhibited its replica at the Vienna Exposition of 1873. See Kinoshita, \textit{Bijutsu to iu Misemono}, 31. In China, a comparative transformation of stone statues from religious objects to aesthetic objects occurred in the late nineteenth century. See Stanley K. Abe, “From Stone to Sculpture: The Alchemy of the Modern,” in \textit{Treasures Rediscovered: Chinese Stone Sculpture from the Sackler Collections at Columbia University} (New York: Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, 2008), 7-16.}}
concealed in its chamber for over a hundred years. Unveiling the heavily wrapped Kannon, Okakura examined and described its material, size, coloring, and style. Unlike the temple priests, who regarded Buddhist icons as objects of veneration, Okakura viewed them as material for art historical study. With this new understanding of Buddhist icons as artworks, Okakura directed his quest for the origins of Japanese “fine art” toward India.

**Positioning China and India**

Okakura’s conceptualization of China and India as the great civilizations of the past, but in ruins in the present, points

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39 The priests at the temple resisted because they believed it would incur the Kannon’s anger, Okakura, “Nihon Bijutsu-shi,” 36-37.


42 However, this view of Buddhist icons as artworks does not impair the significance of Buddhism as a religion for Okakura. On the contrary, he gives Buddhism agency in connecting the many regions of Asia. Giving Buddhism this role could be seen as Okakura’s strategy to reverse the major narrative of European history, which had assumed that Christendom united the various nations of Europe as a “universal” religion. For a discussion of the dichotomy of Christianity and other religions, see Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005).
to his understanding of “Asia” in terms that have been
categorized as Orientalist. Art historian Aida Yuen Yuen
argues that Japan created distance from China in the early Meiji
years in part through the selection of Chinese subjects
exclusively from the remote past. Thus Japanese painters of
Okakura’s circle carefully and safely embraced China as Japan’s
cultural heritage, while celebrating the present achievements of
Japan.

Moreover, Okakura’s writing on China finds an analogy in
Edward Said’s formulation of European Orientalism, with the
Orient as watched and the European as “watcher, never involved,
always detached...” His observations following his trips to

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43 Okakura’s longing for the lost glory in the remote past is not unlike
what Ian Barrow calls a “nostalgia,” “a longing for a pure, but lost,
moment” generated in the practice of history. One can re-experience an
original moment by visiting a historical site, imagine a connection
between the past/the dead and the present/the self, and redefine the self.
See Ian J. Barrow, Making History, Drawing Territory: British Mapping in
India, c. 1756-1905 (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003),
particularly chapter 5, 151-181.

44 Aida Yuen Yuen, “Inventing Eastern Art in Japan and China, ca. 1890s to
c. 1930s” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1999), 20-21. I would like
to note another similar problem, Okakura’s criticism of the Chinese
inability to preserve and study their cultural heritage with modernized
academic methods. With such criticism, Okakura might have tried to
justify Japan’s self-appointed mission to study arts of other parts of
Asia. See Okakura, “Tōyō Bijutsu Kanshiki no Seishitsu to Kachi,” in
Okakura Tenshin Zenshū, 2: 142-143; “Chūgoku, Nihon Bijutsu Shin Shūzu-
hin ten,” ibid., 176-177. On Japanese Orientalism in the Meiji era, see
Stefan Tanaka, Japan’s Orient: Rendering Pasts into History.

China (1893, 1906) are marked by dry descriptions of landscape, laced with disappointment at the ruined state of historical sites. Equally notable is the absence of any mention of communication with Chinese people, unlike his enthusiastic interactions in India. The literary critic and philosopher Karatani Kōjin observes that Kantian “disinterestedness,” which Okakura had embraced, on the other hand helped him recognize aesthetic value in “non-Western” objects, but it also prevented

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46 For Okakura’s writings on China, see the speeches on his trips to China, “Shina no Bijutsu” and “Shina Bijutsu ni tsuite,” in Okakura Tenshin Zenshū, 3: 191-215 and 289-290.
him from interacting with the people whose culture created those objects.47

This marked difference in his attitude and engagement with China and India leads me to argue that India played a more significant role in Okakura’s conceptualization of “Asia.” I do not claim that Okakura’s Orientalist attitude did not extend to India, but instead that his perception of contemporary India was qualitatively different from that toward China. Through this move, Okakura de-centered the position of China from earlier conventional Japanese understanding of relationships among Asian

cultural regions. He broke with the teacher-pupil relationship between China and Japan to now shift the center to Japan, and from this repositioning, to write the history of Japanese art and create the past for a modern nation.

The importance of Okakura’s view of India, and his reading of Indian art historical literature to envision this new Japan have only recently attracted scholarly attention. That Okakura kept no diaries or accounts during his trip to India in 1901-1902 may have hindered scholarship in this direction. Studies on Okakura’s experience in India, such as those by his son, Okakura Kazuo, Horioka Yasuko, and then later his grandson, Okakura Koshirō, attempt to reconstruct Okakura’s activities and intellectual development from his own writings and speeches after the trip, and from those of the people he interacted

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48 This view toward China may partially have resulted from Japan’s ever-worsening relationship with China and the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95. Some Japanese intellectuals of the time attempted to justify the War by claiming it was the war between the old civilization (China) and the new civilization (Japan) and by emphasizing the Japan’s mission to civilize Asia as the representative of both “Eastern” traditions and “Western” civilization. On this issue, see Yamamuro Shin’ichi, Shiso Kadai to shiteno Ajia, 45-46. Yamamuro mentions, for example, Fukuzawa Yukichi, Kuga Katsunan (陸羯南 1857-1907, a nationalist journalist), and Uchimura Kanzō (内村鑑三 1861-1930, a Christian activist) as Japanese intellectuals who viewed China as an old civilization fallen behind Japan in modernizing the nation.

49 Okakura’s son, Kazuo, introduces a few letters addressed to Nihon Bijutsuin to this dialogue. According to him, these are the only materials available. Okakura Kazuo, Chichi Okakura Tenshin (1939; reprint, Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1971), 169-171.
They name Swami Vivekananda (1862-1902), the Hindu nationalist leader and founder of the Ramakrishna Mission, Sister Nivedita (Margaret Noble, 1867-1911), Vivekananda’s disciple, and members of the family of Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Bengali poet and Nobel Prize winner for Literature, as major figures in Okakura’s Indian encounter. However, the nature of Okakura’s involvement with these Indian nationalists remains unclear.

Okakura’s interaction with these Indian intellectuals has been of interest in more recent studies. Noriko Murai points out that Okakura borrowed the idea of Advaita (the Vedantic doctrine that identifies the Self with the Whole) from Vivekananda. Similarly, Victoria Weston also notes that Vivekananda’s philosophy had broad appeal to Okakura and that Okakura and Vivekananda used similar strategies of contrasting “East” and “West” to disseminate their ideas to a “Western”

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audience. These studies stress the role of European and American female followers of Vivekananda, particularly Sister Nivedita, Josephine MacLeod (1858-1949), and Sara Bull (1850-1911), in connecting Vivekananda and Okakura. Murai characterizes Okakura’s relationships with these “Western” women by employing the mother to child analogy, with Okakura acting like a mischievous child and the women accepting him like a mother. She argues that this mother-child relationship made this cross-racial and cross-gender relationship acceptable to Euro-American cultural social norms by casting Okakura in a subordinate role. By emphasizing the role of these Euro-American women, these scholars underscore the complex intertwining of gender and race in Okakura’s Indian connections.

Most recently Rustom Bharucha has reassessed the nature of Okakura’s relationship with Rabindranath Tagore. Despite their mutual affection, Bharucha emphasizes that Okakura and Tagore had very different views of “Asia” and nationalism. While

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Okakura became more imperialistic in his later writings such as *Awakening of Japan* (1904), Tagore, according to Bharucha, seems to have distanced himself from state-level nationalist politics to support, instead, society and community activism by the time he delivered a lecture against nationalism in Japan in 1916.\(^{54}\)

Although Tagore did not mention Okakura in person in this lecture, Bharucha reads this move as the antithesis to Okakura’s imperialism.\(^{55}\) Previously, when Okakura had stayed with the Tagores in India in 1902, the two men certainly shared a passion for Asian art and nationalism. However, Bharucha’s work resists a simple association of the two men as representatives of a monolithic Pan-Asianism by exploring their divergent agendas in their particular social and cultural contexts.\(^{56}\)

\(^{54}\) Rustom Bharucha, *Another Asia: Rabindranath Tagore and Okakura Tenshin* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 51-57. Bharucha’s argument could also point to Tagore’s distancing particularly from the *swadeshi* movement (advocating Indian-made products). For discussions of Tagore’s changes in his relationships to the *swadeshi* movement, see, for example, Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 95-101. In this, Bose describes Tagore as a patriot, but not a nationalist, 101.


Although the above scholarship contributes to our understanding of the multilayered relationships between Okakura and Indian intellectuals, my study draws most from the work of Inoue Shōichi, a historian of architecture and culture. He reviews Okakura’s conceptualization of Pan-Asianism by exploring Okakura’s view of ancient Japanese architecture and its relations to European architecture. In his historiography of the Japanese scholarship on the Greek origins for the architectural form of the Hōryū-ji temple, Inoue notes that Okakura initially identified Greek origins for ancient Japanese art, but subsequently denied it after his trip to India. Inoue’s work points out the need for greater scholarly attention to Okakura’s interactions with intellectuals in India to address the vexed issue of Greek origins for Asian art. The works of Ernest Binfield Havell (1861-1934) and Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) also deny the Greek origins of ancient Indian art. However, because they postdate Okakura’s writings on the subject, Inoue suggests the possibility that discussions of the topic between Okakura and intellectuals during his trip to India changed his views. Yet he does not investigate this matter in

any depth to substantiate precisely which scholarly sources
Okakura engaged to reconsider the origins of Indian art.\(^{58}\)

Inaga Shigemi, a scholar of comparative culture, offers evidence
to support Inoue's argument by pointing to ideas shared by
Sister Nivedita and Okakura through a comparison of their
writings on Indian nationalism.\(^{59}\) He concludes that Okakura's
Pan-Asianism stemmed, at least partially, from conversations
with Nivedita. While I agree with his position, it does not
fully account for intensity and passion in Okakura's refutation
of the European claim for Greek origins of Indian art.

I argue that Okakura had more scholarly sources at hand to
shape his position. I identify the scholarship of Rájendralála
Mitra as one of these cornerstones in Okakura's formulation of
Asian and Japanese national identities. Okakura appreciated
Mitra's works both through his reading of them and in his

\(^{58}\) Inaga Shigemi agrees that Havell and Coomaraswamy, and their
intellectual communities, provided Okakura the grounds for arguing
originality of ancient Indian art, and hence, the cultural independence of
Asia from Greece. Inaga, "Rinen to shiteno Ajia: Okakura Tenshin to Tōyō
Bijutsu-shi no Kősō, soshite sono Tenmatsu," parts 1 and 2, Kokubungaku
(Tokyo) 45, no. 8 (July 2000): 11-19 and no. 10 (August 2000): 114-124;
Inaga, "Okakura Tenshin to Indo: Ekkyō suru Kindai Kokumin Ishiki to Han
Ajia Ideorogi no Kisū," in Modanizumu no Ekkyō, ed., Modanizumu Kenkyū-kai
(Kyoto: Jimbun Shoin, 2002), 76-102.

\(^{59}\) Inaga, "Sister Nivedita and Her Kali The Mother, The Web of Indian Life,
and Art Criticism: The Insights Into Okakura Kakuzō's Indian Writings and
the Function of Art in the Shaping of Nationality," Japan Review (Kyoto)
16 (2004): 129-159.
discussions with Indian nationalist intellectuals who emulated Mitra’s strategy of laying the groundwork of historical knowledge as the foundation of national consciousness. In doing so, I clarify the role of Okakura’s intellectual experiences in India toward the formulation of Pan-Asianism.

**Okakura and Rájendralála Mitra**

Okakura probably found Mitra’s works useful for his own argument primarily because they were both responding to similar European practices of Orientalizing across different cultural regions of Asia. Both men’s scholarship emerged from that very practice, by utilizing available European knowledge of Asia’s past and attempting to take this information in a direction that was markedly different from that pursued by European intellectuals. By comparing Okakura’s and Mitra’s intellectual background, here I argue that although they never met, their works were in some ways parallel as projects searching for cultural identity in the midst of European intellectual dominance and that Okakura’s ideas built on Mitra’s works.

British studies on the Indian past emerged hand in hand with their colonial and mercantile enterprises in the region.
As Bernard Cohn puts it, European scholars looked “for conformities between the living exotics of India and their ancient counterparts in Egypt, Greece, and Rome.” From the late eighteenth century, European intellectuals, military personnel, administrators, traders, travelers, and missionaries began to collect information in an increasingly systematic way. Two major strongholds were the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta (present day Kolkata) founded by Sir William Jones (1746-1794) in 1784, and the Archaeological Survey of India founded by the British colonial government in 1861. At the Asiatic Society, material about Indic languages, literature, antiquity, customs, and religions was collected, studied, classified, labeled, and housed. The Survey, under Alexander

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61 For more information about these institutions, see for example, the Asiatic Society, ed., Time Past and Time Present: Two Hundred and Twenty-Five Years of the Asiatic Society (Kolkata: The Asiatic Society, 2008) and Sourindranath Roy, The Story of Indian Archaeology, 1784-1947 (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1961).

Cunningham (1814-1893), excavated archaeological sites extensively. Concurrent with the Japanese endeavor to create a category of “fine art,” such European scholars were redefining Indian objects according to their conceptual categories and principles.

A byproduct of these centers of knowledge production was the emergence of Indian scholars, including Rájendralálá Mitra, who joined the Society in 1846 as a librarian and assistant secretary. His interpretation of the Indic past as glorious and continuous into the present challenged British scholars who emphasized Greek features in ancient Indian stone architecture (see chapter 3) and contributed significantly to building national consciousness among the subsequent generation of Bengali intellectuals, particularly the Tagore family, who hosted Okakura. It is likely that Okakura picked up Mitra’s works at this time and utilized them to locate the originality of Indian civilization as the source of “Asian” culture.

Okakura and Mitra shared similar educational and social backgrounds, and their positions in society gave each a

63 Initially the Society’s membership was limited exclusively to Europeans, but it began to accept Indian scholars in 1829. See Time Past and Time Present, 5.
particular advantage to take on the enormous task of re-examining the past formulated by European and American Orientalists. Both men were operating at momentous historic junctures as their countries were establishing national cultures, processes on which they had enormous impact. When Mitra was born in 1822, Calcutta, under the English East India Company, underwent tremendous changes in its encounter with British culture. One major by-product was the emergence of an urban elite with European education and tastes (*babus*).\(^{64}\)

Rájendralála Mitra may be located, in part, in this new class of English-educated Indians, even if not in its aristocratic circles. Likewise, Okakura was born at a moment of flux, with the rapid incursion of Euro-American culture in Japan. Both Mitra and Okakura had access to the best traditional and Euro-American education available and excelled in languages, including the vernacular (Bengali and Japanese respectively), classical (Sanskrit and Chinese), as well as English, which laid

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\(^{64}\) For discussions on this newly emerging social class, see, for example, Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: the Manly Englishman and the effeminate Bengali* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995) and Sumanta Banerjee, *Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1989).
the ground for them to reexamine the knowledge of their traditions.

Mitra and Okakura both started their careers as assistants to British and American pioneering scholars, experiences that allowed them to grow into the first generation of modern scholars of their own cultures. Both eagerly learned from the leading Orientalists the basic academic methods necessary for the historical study of cultures. Further, they were affiliated with the premier academic institutions of the time. Mitra assisted eminent British Orientalists at the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Okakura was educated by European and American teachers at the University of Tokyo. Later as a bureaucrat at the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, Okakura assisted his former American teachers, Edward Morse (1838-1925) and Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908), and an American collector of Japanese art, William Sturgis Bigelow (1850-1926). From these beginnings, they eventually claimed

65 For a discussion of the emergence of native scholars in India, see Tapati Guha-Thakurta, “Interlocuting Texts and Monuments: The Coming of Age of the ‘Native’ Scholar,” in Monuments, Objects, Histories, 85-111.

positions of authority to propagate their evolving ideologies. Mitra became the first Indian president of Asiatic Society in 1885, and Okakura the director of the Tokyo Fine Arts School (東京美術学校), the predecessor of the present Tokyo University of the Arts, in 1890. Taking advantage of the privileges of their positions, each launched a sustained quest for the past to formulate national identities.

**Organization of the Dissertation**

This dissertation locates *Ideals of the East* in its historical, political, and intellectual context through examining a particular encounter and its reverberations in the construction of the destinies of two nations and the narratives of their art and histories. In chapter 2 I argue that through dialogue about Asian cultures with Indian intellectuals in Calcutta (Kolkata today), Okakura’s growing skepticism about the European theory of the Greek origins of Indian art strengthened into a conviction that it was a fantasy manufactured by European scholars. From December 1901 Okakura spent ten months in India. It is most likely that during this time he finished the manuscript of his first major publication, *The Ideals of the*
East, and sent it to the publisher John Murray in London.

Although Okakura’s son, Kazuo, remembered that his father was writing the manuscript before his departure to India, the shifts in his thinking about Greek influence on ancient Indian art in the book suggest that he completed or at least rewrote some chapters in India.\(^6\)

To examine this process, I first analyze Okakura’s reactions to European and American scholarship that claimed Greek origins of ancient Japanese and Indian art. I read in his writings and lectures of 1901, increasingly ambivalent attitudes toward such Euro-American scholarship. I argue that by the time he finished writing *Ideals of the East*, his voice gained confidence in disputing these Orientalist positions. I conclude that Okakura’s perception of Indian cultures had shifted during his trip, and that he had acquired the tangible evidence as well as strategies to make his contention.

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\(^6\) Kazuo remembered his father had been writing the manuscript for more than a year before the departure. According to Kazuo, Okakura had negotiated with the publisher through Josephine MacLeod, an American visitor to Okakura, and expected the royalty to cover the trip to India. Okakura Kazuo, *Chichi Okakura Tenshin*, 167. Also, Sister Nivedita wrote the introduction for the publication. Therefore, it is likely that Okakura brought the manuscript, which was almost finished, with him to India and completed it there.
In the third chapter I locate a significant source for Okakura’s refutation of the Greek origins of Indian art in the published works of Rájendralála Mitra. The Fergusson–Mitra debate on the subject reveals the significant role Mitra played in the colonial setting and for successive generations of Indian nationalists. Through a comparative reading of Okakura’s writings with those by Mitra, I examine their analogousness to suggest how Okakura may have utilized Mitra’s claims toward building his own arguments at the same time that his contemporary Indian nationalists were turning to Mitra as a role model. Okakura, upon his returning to Japan, declared:

In India, in the recent four to five years, excellent scholars have emerged, especially among literary studies in the Renaissance-like movement. Especially with Rajendralala Mitra of Bengal as the pioneer, firm research has flourished in new annotations of the Vedas, medieval dramas and songs. It is very interesting and suggestive that they have created new knowledge that English scholars could not. The mistranslations of inscriptions and misclassification of styles by English scholars have been corrected. Consequently, the chronology that was compiled by English scholars had to be altered. In addition, against the opinions of English scholars who insisted on Greek influences on India, Indian scholars have found that
the influences should be limited only to Bactria and other Greek colonies in north India.  

I examine the ways in which Okakura recognized and reflected on Mitra’s contribution as a strong challenge to British colonial scholarship on India in re-assessing both content, from translation to interpretation of primary material, and more importantly for my purposes the perspective and politics Mitra brought to his work as a “native” scholar. I argue that this encounter was a decisive moment for Okakura in his refutation of Euro-American views of Asia and therefore, his formulation of Pan-Asianism.

In the fourth chapter I turn to the paintings of Indian subjects by Okakura’s disciples, Yokoyama Taikan (横山大観 1868-1958) and Hishida Shunsō (菱田春草 1874-1911). Okakura had sent these artists to India to further explore and substantiate his ideas. I argue that their paintings can be read as visualizing the impact of their Indian encounters, and their attempts to formulate Japanese national identity in relation to Okakura’s Pan-Asianism in a distinctive visual language.

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This dissertation therefore hones our understanding of Okakura’s Pan-Asianism in his association with Indian nationalist intellectuals by locating the works of Rájendralála Mitra as significant source material. I examine how Okakura deployed both Mitra’s conclusions and also his strategies to further his cause, Japanese national and Asian identities. In doing so, I demonstrate how central interpretations of the past were for Okakura as for his Indian contemporaries in nation building at the beginning of the twentieth century.
CHAPTER 2

TRACING SHIFTS IN OKAKURA’S UNDERSTANDING OF “INDIA”

In this chapter, I examine the development of Okakura’s thoughts on India toward the formulation of his position of arguing that “Asia is one.” To do so, I focus on two key issues: the question of “Indo-Greek” art and the authenticity of Indian civilization that was at stake in the coinage of the term, and second, the construction of Buddhism and its deployment. Okakura’s early writings in the 1880s indicate that he understood Japanese art to belong to “Eastern” civilization, as distinct from “Western” civilization.69 In his East/West dichotomy, Okakura placed India, along with China, as the origins of “Eastern civilization,” but did not exhibit substantial knowledge of Indian art and its history. Over time,

69 Other Meiji intellectuals who used the East/West dichotomy include Inoue Enryō (井上円了 1858–1919), a Buddhist scholar, whose book on the history of philosophy is underpinned by the assumption of two distinct categories: Eastern and Western philosophy. See Inoue Enryō, Tetsugaku Yōryō (Tokyo: Tetsugaku Shoin, 1887). Okakura, however, later deployed this dichotomy less, and instead, used the Asia/Europe dichotomy more frequently as I have shown in my Introduction.
however, he studied Indian art through books written by British scholars of India that were available to him in Tokyo. Some of these works were clearly Euro-centric in their assumption of the superiority of Greek art and concomitant discrediting of the originality of Indian art. Particularly, the European notion of “Indo-Greek” art, which asserted the Greek origins of Indian ancient art, posed problems for Okakura. It obscured his clear demarcation between the “East” and the “West” and, hence, disturbed his primary assertion of Japanese identity as distinct from “the West.” Yet Okakura attempted to work the “Indo-Greek” style into his narrative of Japanese art history.

Simultaneously, however, his writing displays conviction in the originality of Asian art, which led him to express growing doubts about the Euro-centric premise of an “Indo-Greek” style.

In India, he had the opportunity to acquire deeper knowledge of Indian culture and religions, understand lived Indian experiences and perspectives, and, based upon direct observation, began to formulate a critique of the European-biased “Indo-Greek” theory. He now confirmed the distinctiveness and significance of Asian art through his reflections on Buddhism, and positioned India as the birthplace
of all Asian cultures and religions. On his return to Japan, Okakura energetically promoted his new awareness of the importance of studying Indian art for a Pan-Asian point of view that de-centered earlier geo-political and cultural mappings.

**Troubling the East/West Dichotomy**

Okakura’s 1887 speech at the Kanga-kai (鑑画会) explicitly differentiates the “East” from the “West” in their origins and developments, and locates India as the place of the origins of Japanese culture. Delivered immediately after his nine-month observation tour of Europe and the United States of America to seek models for Japan’s art education system, he used this speech to address the future of Japanese art. Criticizing the extreme Westernization of Japanese culture as well intense conservatism, Okakura concluded that Japanese artists needed to develop a new style of Japanese art based on Japan’s own traditions, and on Chinese and Indian civilizations. However, if necessary, some elements could be adopted from Europe or

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70 Kanga-kai was a major art appreciation group of its day, composed primarily of elite government officials of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture.
America.\textsuperscript{71} Therefore, it was crucial for Japanese artists to understand the origins and histories of both Japanese and European art.

Based on Greco-Roman civilizations, they [Europe] established and ruled their nations. Based on Chinese and Indian civilizations, we [Japan] have reached the present form of our nation.\textsuperscript{72}

This early reference to India was important, yet brief as his knowledge of India was limited at this time. The most basic elements of his Pan-Asian formulation can already be observed in

\textsuperscript{71} Okakura Kakuzō, “Kanga-kai ni oite,” (1887; reprint in Okakura Tenshin Zenshū), 3: 173-177. In the late nineteenth century, the import of European cultures during the Meiji Restoration resulted in a split of the cultural policies between extreme Westernization and a conservative reaction. Proponents of the former argued that Japanese traditional art did not have any value anymore and that all Japanese artists should learn European art and create their works in a “Western” style, while proponents of the latter tried to exclude European influence from Japanese art. Although Okakura did not mention any specific names, an example of the former would be Koyama Shōtarō (小山正太郎), an oil painter who denied the artistic value of traditional calligraphy and had a dispute over this issue with Okakura. On this dispute, see Koyama’s “Sho ha bijutsu narasu,” Toyo Gakugei Zasshi no. 8, 9, 10 (1882) and Okakura’s “Sho ha bijutsu narasu no ron wo yomu,” (1882; reprint in Okakura Tenshin Zenshū), 3: 5-12; exhibition catalogue, Koyama Shōtarō to “Sho ha bijutsu narasu” no Jidai (Nagaoka [Niigata]: Niigata Kenritsu Kindai Bijutsukan, 2002). An example of the latter can be seen in the formation of Ryūchi-kai (龍池会), an art appreciation group whose mission was to protect and promote traditional Japanese art. For more information about Ryūchi-kai, see Ryūchi-kai Hökoku, 4 vols. (reprint of the original reports of Ryūchi-kai, 1885-1887, ed. Aoki Shigeru, Tokyo: Yumani Shobo, 1991).

\textsuperscript{72} 「彼は希臘、羅馬の開明に基きて国を建て家を治めたものなり。我は支那、印度の開明に根き今日の組織あるものなり。」, Okakura, “Kanga-kai ni oite,” 176. All translations are mine unless noted otherwise.
the emphasis on the close cultural relationships among various regions of Asia. It was likely levied to criticize the conservative extremists who sought to preserve "pure Japanese-ness." He pointed out that ancient Japanese cultures had always been open to foreign influence such as art from China and Korea, and claimed that there had never been any "pure Japanese-ness."

At this point, however, he did not consider the impact of India on Japan. Even though he could identify India as one of the sources of Asian civilizations, India may very well have been too far away to imagine a direct relationship in the arts of the two regions.

As Okakura gradually read European works about Indian culture, his clear demarcation between the "East" and the "West," and his positioning of India as the origins for the "East" were challenged by the theory of the "Indo-Greek" style. Okakura’s 1890 series of lectures on "The History of Japanese Art" at the Tokyo Fine Arts School indicates increasing familiarity with Indian art through the scholarship produced

73 Ryūchi-kai is an example of this conservatism. See Ryūchi-kai Hōkoku.
74 Okakura, "Kanga-kai ni oite," 177.
primarily by British scholars. He now expressed ambivalence, in the sense that he both accepted and questioned the term “Indo-Greek” employed by British scholars such as James Fergusson and Alexander Cunningham.

Okakura first attempted to incorporate the Indo-Greek style in his history of Japanese art when he analyzed arts from the Tenji period (天智 662-728), specifically in his discussion of the Hōryū-ji temple complex. In comparing the murals (Figure 2.1) with the Buddhist icons, Shaka Sanzon-zō (釈迦三尊像

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75 Although manuscripts for this lecture do not survive, six versions of the lecture notes taken by his students do. Based on them, Yoshizawa Tadashi and Yoshida Chizuko reconstructed the lectures, titled “Nihon Bijutsu-shi,” regarded as the standard text today. Okakura, “Nihon Bijutsu-shi,” in Okakura Tenshin Zenshū, 4: 3-167. All of my quotations from the lecture are based on this standard text.

Śākyamuni Triad) (Figure 2.2) at the Kondō (金堂 the Golden Hall), the main hall of the temple, he emphasized stylistic differences between the two, pointing to the contrast between the rigid lines of the Shaka Sanzon-zō and the fleshy modeling of the wall figures.77 While the former emphasizes frontality and symmetry, the latter expresses slight movement of the bodies, with inclined heads and asymmetrical posture. Okakura attributed the Shaka Sanzon-zō to the Suiko period (推古 592-

77 Although the Shaka Sanzon-zō dates from 623, dates for the Hōryū-ji murals had not been determined in Okakura’s time. Scholars argued whether the buildings at Hōryū-ji temple were original from the Suiko period or rebuilt after they were burned in a fire in the Tenji period. Based on ancient documents and the distinct style of the murals, Okakura believed that there was a fire and the buildings were rebuilt. He thought that somehow the sculptures had been saved and housed in the new building. He attributed the difference in style between the sculptures and the murals to this difference in dates of production. Okakura, “Nihon Bijutsu-shi,” 33. Today, we know from archaeological evidence that the original buildings of the temple were once destroyed by a fire in 670 and rebuilt soon after. Therefore, the Kondō murals likely date to the late Tenji period (sometime in the Jitō reign, possibly 686-697). For a more detailed discussion for the dating of the painting, see Hida Romi, “Kondō Hekiga,” in Hōryū-ji Bijutsu: Ronsō no Shiten, ed. Ōhashi Katsuaki (Tokyo: Gurafusha, 1998), 307-329. As most of the paintings were lost in another fire in 1949, the figure I reproduce here is a photograph taken before this second fire.
661) and the murals to the Tenji period.⁷⁸ He attributed the distinctiveness of Tenji art to adaptation of the Indo-Greek style, and discerned stylistic similarities between the murals at Hōryō-ji and Gandharan Buddhist sculpture.⁷⁹ Relying on European scholarship on Indian art, Okakura thus tried to

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⁷⁸ He explained the stylistic divergence between the two consecutive periods: “In this [Tenji] period, art had a peculiar character that was not simply a natural development from the preceding period, Suiko. A new style was imported and, because of this, it seems that the development was much quickened. Namely, this is the import of the Indo-Greek style, which combined Indian and Greek styles. This Indo-Greek style was the core of Tenji art and dominant even in the following Tenpyō period [(天平 729-781)].” 「この時にあたりて美術は一種特異の性質を有し、推古時代より自然に発達せるもののみにあらず。他に一分子の輸入せられしものありて、その進歩の勢いを一層強からしめたるがごとし。これインド・ギリシア風の輸入にして、すなわちこの二国風の混和せるものをいう。このインド・ギリシア風は天智時代美術の形質を成し、この性質基礎となりて、天平時代をも支配せるものなるがごとし。」, Okakura, “Nihon Bijutsu-shi,” 41. Although the Suiko reign ended in 628 and the Tenji reign in 671, Okakura dated the Suiko and some following reigns until 661 as the Suiko period, and the Tenji similarly up to 728. Okakura also grouped several reigns after the Tenji period as Tenpyō.

⁷⁹ He noted the more naturalistic depiction of hairstyle and drapery and the smaller heads, shared by these Tenji-period murals and Gandharan figures, in contrast with the Suiko works. Okakura, “Nihon Bijutsu-shi,” 41. By the term “Indo-Greek,” Okakura meant the Gandharan style because he said many of this kind were housed in the British Museum in London. His description of the original location for these works was “in the south region of the Himalayas or the Indian border with Persia,” most probably the area used be called Gandhara, present day Pakistan and Afghanistan.
explain the stylistic divergence of the Hōryū-ji murals by employing the term “Indo-Greek.”

The very fact that Okakura employed the term “Indo-Greek” suggests that he encountered this body of South Asian material through European scholarship. One of his guides through South Asian art was Alexander Cunningham (1814-1893), a British archaeologist and the first Director General of the Archaeological Survey in India. In the same lecture, Okakura introduced Cunningham as the author of the Ancient Geography of India, where Cunningham compared the names of places in the travelogue of Xuan-zang (玄奘 c.602-664), the renowned Chinese Buddhist pilgrim to India, documents from Alexander’s time, and

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80 The foreign influence on the Kondō murals has been much debated since the late nineteenth century. The first generation, including Okakura and Fenollosa, saw elements from Gandharan art. After the publication of Ajanta paintings at the end of the nineteenth century, some scholars began to see Ajanta and Central India as a source. Later, as I argue in the following pages, Okakura himself mentioned the influence of Ajanta in his The Ideals of the East of 1903, 126. Then, after Marc Aurel Stein published Ancient Khotan: detailed report of archaeological explorations in Chinese Turkestan in 1907, scholars began to claim that art of Central Asia, especially today’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, which appropriated from Gandharan and Indian styles, was brought to China and transformed into a new Chinese style in the late seventh century. This mixed Chinese style with foreign elements, they claim, had a visible impact on the style of the Kondō murals. This last view remains most plausible today; most scholars deny the direct influence of Gandharan art on Japan. For a detailed scholarly history of foreign influence on the Kondō murals, see Hida, “Kondō Hekiga.”

81 The library of the Tokyo Fine Arts School, where Okakura was principal, housed many foreign books on art including Cunningham’s The Ancient Geography of India (originally published by Trübner & Co., London, 1871). See the annotated bibliography in Okakura Tenshin Zenshū, vol. 4, 529.
present day. Although Cunningham was aware of the existence of stone architecture in India before the arrival of Alexander the Great to the region, he was one of the foremost European scholars to claim that the ancient Indians had learned the art of sculpture from the Greeks.

Okakura’s other sources included James Fergusson’s *A History of Architecture in All Countries from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*. This set, one volume of which was dedicated to Indian architecture, was used as a textbook of architecture at the Imperial University (the University of Tokyo

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82 Cunningham was credited with identifying places where Xuan-zang visited in the seventh century. Okakura, “Nihon Bijutsu-shi,” 46.

83 Cunningham said, “I agree with Mr. Fergusson in thinking that the Indians in all probability derived the art of sculpture from the Greeks,” but also explained, “I do not suppose that building with stone was unknown to the Indians at the time of Alexander’s invasion,” Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey of India*, Report III, 97, quoted in Rájendralála Mitra, *Buddha Gayá: the Hermitage of Śákya Mini* (1878; reprint, New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 2005), 166.

today) where Okakura studied.\textsuperscript{85} Okakura thus had the opportunity to grasp Fergusson’s position that ancient Indians learned stone architecture from the Greeks. At the time that Okakura developed this initial understanding of the Indo-Greek style, he lacked both firsthand experience of Indian materials and Indian scholarship.

He attributed the expedition of Alexander to India in the fourth century BCE to be the trigger for Greek art spreading into Asia.\textsuperscript{86} Consequently, the earliest surviving Buddhist

\textsuperscript{85} Although Okakura did not major in architecture, the book was standard for anyone who desired to learn architectural history, and some copies remained in the library at the University of Tokyo. The library of the University of Tokyo housed books by James Fergusson, including both A History of Architecture in All Countries and its original version, The Illustrated Handbook of Architecture. See the library catalogue at http://www.lib.u-tokyo.ac.jp. The instructor at the university was a British architect, Josiah Conder (1852-1920). Although Conder taught at the Imperial College of Engineering (a part of the Imperial University), it is possible that Okakura ran into him or read the textbook used by Conder. Jonathan M. Reynolds, “Teaching Architectural History in Japan: Building a Context for Contemporary Practice,” The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians (Chicago) 61, 4 (Dec., 2002): 530-531.

\textsuperscript{86} 「アレキサンダー王遺志を継ぎ隊を組んで欧洲よりアジアに侵入し、ついに古世界を統一するの機を得たり。いわゆるアレキサンダー王の東征にして、ギリシア美術の東洋に入るの端を開けるなり。」 (Alexander the Great, following his father’s plan, proceeded to Asia and gained the opportunity to rule the world beyond Europe. It is the so-called Expedition of Alexander the Great, and the beginning of Greek art being brought to the East.) Okakura, “Nihon Bijutsu-shi,” 43.
sculptures from South Asia were products of this interaction.\textsuperscript{87}

At this point, his lectures did not express awareness that this hypothesis was formulated from a European point of view or that there might be another point of view circulating in India.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{87}「かくのごとくギリシアとインドとの交通はつねにこれあり。加うるに美術家の来りしことよりもありて、ギリシア風建築をインドに遺し、あるいはギリシア語を使用する土地もあり、ギリシア人の移住せしところも多かりき。当時は今よりおよそ二千三百年前にして、これより二百年前、すなわち今より二千五百年前は実に仏氏降世の時に疑えば、ギリシア風のインドに入りし時代は仏教のさかんに行われたりし時にあたれり。しかればその仏像を作るにもギリシア風を用いたるなるべく、今インドに遺存する大理石の仏像はギリシア風の影響を受けたるものなること容易に断言するを得べし。」 (Therefore, there have always been contacts between Greece and India. In addition, Greek artists visited India and introduced architecture in the Greek style. There were some regions where the Greek language was spoken or Greeks immigrated. ... Two hundred years before this, two thousand and five hundred years ago from now, it was the time the Buddha was born. Therefore, when the Greek style was brought to India, Buddhism was in its high prosperity in India. The Indians must have used this Greek style to generate images of the Buddha. It can be easily asserted that the marble statues of the Buddha in India were produced under the influences of Greek style.) Okakura, "Nihon Bijutsu-shi," 44.

\textsuperscript{88} Okakura concluded that "with no doubt, at least for three hundred years after the death of Alexander, the domains of Seleukos I, one of the successors of Alexander, were under the influence of Greek culture...Their culture is a mixture of Greek and Indian ones, then called the Indo-Greek style." 「しからばアレキサンダー王死後、少なくとも三百年前は、セレウキア勢力の達する地方はギリシア風の影響を受けたこと疑いなし。 (中略) かくしてギリシアとインド美術と混和せるものはインド・ギリシア風にして・・・」 Okakura, "Nihon Bijutsu-shi," 44. Okakura noted that this Indo-Greek encounter was recorded in Greek history, but not in Indian history. Okakura must have relied on Roman accounts of the lost Greek writings translated into English or modern histories based on Roman writings such as Arrian, The Campaigns of Alexander, and Plutarch, Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans. Okakura, "Nihon Bijutsu-shi," 43. Okakura introduced an episode of a fight between Alexander and Porus, one of the Indian kings. The account, however, was written from the victor’s viewpoint. What Okakura missed, or was unable to hear, were the voices of the ones who lost. For example, a Bengali poet, Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-1873) wrote a poem on the story of King Porus in c. 1843. See his King Porus---A Legend of Old, reprinted in Vinayak Gokak, The Golden Treasury of Indo-Anglian Poetry, 1828-1965 (New Delhi,: Sahitya Akademi, 1970), 64-67.
Yet, an encounter of two cultures must surely be far more complicated.

When Okakura tried to advance the Greek influence on Asia further east to China and Japan, he was unable to substantiate his hypothesis for traveling routes for the Indo-Greek style. He asserted that the style spread through northern regions of China such as "Bactria and Gette [月氏 Yue-zhi, the second century BCE to the first century CE]," where Greek communities stayed even after Alexander departed. He then speculated that the Buddhist sculptures Xuan-zang brought back from India to China must have been of the Indo-Greek style because he had traversed the northern regions. However, these assertions were based solely on the facts that China kept its relationships with Yue-zhi and Persia during the Han dynasty (漢 the Earlier Han 206 BCE-8 CE and the Later Han 25-220), and that the T’ang Dynasty (唐 618-907) of China expanded to Central and West Asia.

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in the seventh and eighth centuries.\textsuperscript{91} Okakura concluded "it was natural for China to be influenced by the Indo-Greek style through Gette [Yue-zhi] and Persia more or less."\textsuperscript{92} From here it became possible for Japan to be influenced by the Indo-Greek style.\textsuperscript{93}

This premise, based on general historical facts and without analyzing any works of art, remained unconvincing. Okakura

\textsuperscript{91} Okakura, “Nihon Bijutsu-shi,” 46-47. Okakura cited History of Northern Dynasties (北史 Bei Shi), one of the Twenty-four Histories of China, which was compiled by Li Yanshou in 659. Yanshou Li, Bei shi: [100 juan] (Beijing: Zhong hua shu ju, 1974).

\textsuperscript{92} 「その美術の多少インド・ギリシア風の影響を受けたるは自然の理」 Okakura, “Nihon Bijutsu-shi,” 45.

\textsuperscript{93} Okakura was not unique in seeing the Indo-Greek style in Japanese art. He shared this view with a group of scholars whose leading figure was Ernest Fenollosa. For Fenollosa’s accounts on "Eastern" Art, see his Bijutsu Sinsetsu (Tokyo: Ryūchi-kai: 1882) and Epochs of Chinese & Japanese Art, an Outline History of East Asiatic Design (London,: W. Heinemann, 1912). As a passionate collector of Japanese art, Fenollosa advised the Japanese government to preserve ancient cultural artifacts and led, with Okakura, research projects to examine art works housed in old temples and shrines. Fenollosa was amazed to find Greek elements in the murals at Hōryū-ji temple and other ancient temples. Echoing Cunningham and Fergusson, Fenollosa extended the travel of Greek art to East Asia. This view met with criticism from a group of scholars of Japanese classics who minimized the extent of foreign influence on ancient Japan. Okakura’s lecture on the Indo-Greek style in Tenji art was a promotion of the Fenollosa-Okakura side of the debate. However, Okakura and Fenollosa did not speak in the same voice. Whereas Fenollosa was thrilled with "discovering" the Greek origins of ancient Japanese art and publicly proclaimed his view, Okakura was more cautious about jumping to a conclusion. For a detailed analysis of the beginning of seeing Greek origins in Japanese art, see Inoue Shoichi, Hōryūji e no Seishinshi, 49-61. Inoue also points out the different attitudes of Fenollosa and Okakura toward the Indo-Greek origin of Japanese art. See his Hōryūji, 61-62 and 158. Stefan Tanaka also examines Fenollosa and Okakura’s different attitudes toward constructing Japanese art history. See his “Imaging History”: 24-44.
seemed to realize that the land routes from Greece to Japan did not confirm the transmission of either artworks or artistic styles. In the same lecture, Okakura tried to address these doubts:

Is this stylistic similarity [between Indo-Greek and Tenji] an accident or an inevitable result from a lineage? This is a controversial issue. Those who deny any relationship between them say that the T’ang culture was developed in China spontaneously and had no relationship with India. They may be right. If so, the style of the mural at Kondō is in the style developed at the beginning of the T’ang dynasty and not related to the Indo-Greek style. However, if we take this side of the dispute, then, we cannot explain why they are so similar and why there was no relationship [between China and India] despite the fact that there were some transportation systems to connect the two regions.\(^{94}\)

Okakura had trouble historicizing the similarities in style that he perceived between the Hōryū-ji murals and Gandharan sculpture. Since the Hōryū-ji murals were believed to be contemporary with the T’ang dynasty of China, Okakura surmised that the Gandharan style must have been brought to Japan through T’ang material.

\(^{94}\)「その相似たるは偶然によるか、はた系統を承けてここにいたるか。 これ一問題にして、 彼我関係なしとする論者はいわく、唐代の文化は支那に自然に発達したるものにて、全くインドとの関係なしと。 あるいはこの説のごとくなるやも知るべからず。 ゆえに金堂壁画のごときも、また唐初代において特有の発達をなしたるの風にして、インド・ギリシア風とは全く関係なきやも知るべからず。 しかれども一方より論ずれば、かくのごとし類似し、加うるに彼我交通の途その間に開けたるあり、その間に因縁あるならんかとの疑問を生ずるは免れ難き事なり。」 Okakura, “Nihon Bijutsu-shi,” 41-42.
However, he could not demonstrate stylistic similarities between the T’ang and Gandharan material. His attempt to explain the relationship between the Indo-Greek style and Japanese art thus remained inconclusive: “[H]owever, I am not declaring that this [indirect relationship] must be true. For a while, I should suspend this as one of the theories.”

Another more significant problem of the Indo-Greek style for Okakura’s understanding of “East” and “West” was that it blurred the distinction between the two, and contradicted his position of emphasizing India as the origins for the “East.” Greek origins for Indian culture would impair the originality of Indian art and threaten the distinct differences between Japanese and European cultures if both had their origins in Greece. Okakura’s desire for origins to be “pure” can be

95 「しかれども、余はいまだこの事をもって、必然かなるべしと断言するものにあらず。しばらく一説として存するのみ。」 Okakura, “Nihon Bijutsu-shi,” 47. Even though the routes of cultural influence from India were only hypothetical, Okakura showed some examples of cultural exchanges among broader regions in Asia in ancient times. The first example was the Persian figure painted on the plectrum side of the ancient lute preserved in Shōsō-in, a treasury at Tōdai-ji temple, Nara, built in the eighth-century. Another example is a seemingly Assyrian or Babylonian equestrian figure hunting a tiger on a brocaded flag of Prince Shōtoku housed at Hōryū-ji temple. Even though Okakura could not point to Indian objects in those collections to support his hypothesis about Indian influence, his rationale seems to be that similar portable objects could have been brought to Japan from India, being nearer than Assyria, and provided inspiration to Japanese artists. Okakura, “Nihon Bijutsu-shi,” 42.
discerned in his pursuit of “indigenous Indian art” without any Greek influence, as a source for Japanese art.

Establishing an “indigenous Indian style” must be read as his attempt to reconcile the contradictions posed by the Indo-Greek style for his Pan-Asian view of the “East.” As examples of the distinctiveness of Asian cultures, Okakura introduced, in the same lecture in 1890, three Buddhist sculptures—Standing Jūichimen Kannon (十一面観音立像 Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara) at the Tokyo National Museum, Standing Kumen Kannon-Bosatsu (九面観音菩薩立像 Nine-headed Avalokiteśvara) at the Hōryū-ji temple, and Standing Miroku-Bosatsu (弥勒菩薩立像 Maitreya) at the Murou-ji temple (室生寺)—as “influenced by an indigenous Indian style” with no Greek elements (Figures 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5
respectively). Contrasting these works with the Indo-Greek style, he described the characteristics of the “indigenous Indian” style as having “a high nose, hollow eyes, well-defined features, [and] a slender body with large head and thick arms.” He dated the import of this style to the end of the Tenji period.

Okakura speculated that the style of Standing Juichimen Kannon (Fig. 2.3) must have originated in Ceylon (Sri Lanka today) and been brought to China and then to Japan, where, he believed, the statuette was actually produced in this style. Okakura proposed this assertion probably because this route did not go through northern India, where Greek influence was supposed to be found. See his “Nihon Bijutsu-shi,” 48-49. The route seems to correspond to the route of Theravāda Buddhism (上座部仏教), though he did not mention any Southeast Asian countries, while the route of the Indo-Greek style in his assumption corresponds to the Mahāyāna Buddhism (大乗仏教) route. When thinking of the two different styles travelling to Japan, Okakura must have been thinking about the two different schools of Buddhism travelling there. Some scholars today believe that Standing Juichimen Kannon was brought from T’ang China, where it was produced under the influence of India probably in the second half of the seventh century. They recognize Gupta elements in this statue and refer to the fact that Indian styles prevailed in China after the return of Xuan-zang. See Matsuda Seiichirō, “Tokyo Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan Hakan Jūichimen Kannon-zou, Tōnomine Denrai, ni tsuite (jō/ge),” parts 1 and 2, Kokka (Tokyo), no. 1118 (1988): 7-23; no. 1119 (1988): 32-48; Tanzan Jinja no Meiho (Nara: Nara Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, 2004), 61.

「鼻隆く、眼凹み、顔扁平ならず、細長き体なり。頭も手も大なり。」 Okakura, “Nihon Bijutsu-shi,” 48-49. Of these descriptions of the indigenous Indian style, “large head and thick arms” make a clear contrast to the Indo-Greek style, whose heads are generally smaller and arms thinner.

Recently, a student notebook for Okakura’s lecture, “Taisei Bijutsu-shi (Western Art History)” of 1896 was found. Even though this lecture was about European art, Okakura included India and defined it as “neither Western nor Eastern.” Then, admitting some similarities between Indian and Greek ancient art, Okakura emphasized Persian influences on Indian art. Also, as his main resources, he introduced works by Fergusson and Cunningham. Hirose Midori, “Okakura Tenshin ni yoru ‘Taisei Bijutsu-shi’ Kögi (Meiji 29 nen) ni tsuite no Kōsatsu (sono 1),” Izura Ronsō (Ibaraki [Japan]) 15 (2008): 59-74.
His unease with the Indo-Greek style opened the door to a more critical reading of European Asian studies. Okakura articulated his growing skepticism explicitly in his 1894 lecture on his trip to China.  

At present I have a feeling that Western scholars studied foreign cultures from their stand points, which are firmly based on their nations’ interests. Therefore, their studies are always about how Western cultures were brought to a foreign nation. To the cultural influence from the East to the West, they are quite indifferent. There have been few studies on this subject. It is us, the Easterners, who should study this area. … However, if we study art from an Asian point of view, we should find many examples of Asian influences on European art. I think

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99 The lecture was delivered at a joint meeting of the Tōhō Kyōkai (東邦協会), an organization of intellectuals and politicians studying Asia and Oceania, and the Dai-Nippon Kyōiku-kai (大日本教育会), a nation-wide organization for education made up primarily of school teachers. Tōhō Kyōkai was established in 1890 to encourage the study of the geography, politics, commerce, and history of Asia and Oceania. Its members included politicians and intellectuals. For more information on Tōhō Kyōkai, see Yasuoka Akio, “Tōhō Kyōkai ni tsuite no kisoteki kenkyū,” Hōsei Daigaku Bungaku-bu Kiyou (Tokyo) vol.22 (1976): 61-98. Dai-nippon Kyōiku-kai, established in 1883, was an organization that promoted education. Okakura was a member of both organizations, and this joint meeting was arranged for Okakura’s convenience. See annotated bibliography, Okakura Tenshin Zenshū, 3: 476-77.
This observation indicates his growing awareness that cultural relationships between the "East" and the "West" could not be one way. Rather, he posited, the two cultures must mutually define each other. Appropriating the East/West dichotomy from European scholarship, Okakura now attempted to reverse the exclusive subjectivity of Europe and to create his own direction within the dichotomy. At this juncture he realized that the scarcity of studies of Asian influence on Europe did not mean that there was none, but simply that it had not been studied. Pointing out the bias inherent in Asian studies by European scholars, Okakura now rejected Europe’s exclusive superiority in art. Seeking an

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100 「今自分の少し感じたのは西洋の学者が学問上でも自国と云ふ観念を持って居て研究致しますから、研究する方針が西洋から外国に向かって来たことを主とするやうであります。 東洋からして西洋に及ぼした文化の点に於ては如何にも冷淡であると思はれます。 是れまでそれを論じたことはありませんが、誠に少ないのです。此点は東洋の側から余程研究して往かねばならぬかと思ひます。 （中略）亜細亜の側から調べて往きましたならば亜細亜が欧羅巴に影響して居る点は沢山あるだろうと思います。 それは日本の研究者が将来任じて遣るべき所だろうと思はれます。」 Okakura, "Shina no Bijutsu" (1894; reprint in Okakura Tenshin Zenshū), 3:208.
Asian point of view, Okakura determined to visit the place where he now believed Asian civilizations began, India.\textsuperscript{101}

**Deploying Buddhism to Unify Asia**

*The Ideals of the East* articulates the new insights gained from Okakura’s experience in India. His vision of a distinctive Asian cultural sphere dominates the rousing declaration opening the book:

Asia is one. The Himalayas divide, only to accentuate, two mighty civilisations, 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.\textsuperscript{102}

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\textsuperscript{101} Okakura’s main purpose for visiting India is uncertain, but three motives have been mentioned in previous studies: 1) to escape from social and financial adversity, 2) to conduct research on Buddhist remains, and 3) to meet a Hindu leader, Swami Vivekananda, and invite him to a conference on world religions that Okakura planned to hold in Japan. Okakura Koshirō, *Sofu Okakura Tenshin*, 91–92.

\textsuperscript{102} Okakura Kakuzō, *The Ideals of the East with Special Reference to the Art of Japan* (1903; reprint, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle, 1970), 1.
Here Okakura defined Asia as a unity of various “Eastern” cultures through its geography, “races,” and history of thoughts. This conceptualization grants a definitive role to Asian philosophy, the “love for the Ultimate and Universal” in his terms, with Confucius and the Vedas as its representatives. China and India are privileged as the anchors. Asia became equivalent, in his formulation, or even a superior counterpart to Europe in its philosophy, the former the “Universal,” the latter “Particular.”

Buddhism, as a shared religion, is a running theme that consolidates Okakura’s Asia. His Buddhism, however, is an idea developed from European Orientalist studies as a universal religion, not practices and beliefs prevalent across contemporary Asia.\footnote{For discussions of the European construction of “Buddhism,” see, for example, Richard King, Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and ‘The Mystic East’ (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), particularly chapter 7 “Orientalism and the Discovery of ‘Buddhism,’” 143-160; Tomoko Masuzawa, The Invention of World Religions, or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), particularly chapter 4 “Buddhism, a World Religion,” 121-146.} Buddhism in Japan was in crisis following the Meiji government’s 1868 disaggregation of Buddhism from Shintō, the indigenous religion that had coexisted and partially amalgamated with Buddhism. Shintō was declared the state
religion in 1870. At this time many Buddhist temples and icons were destroyed, and Buddhist priests lost their political and economical privileges. What made it possible for Okakura to imagine Buddhism linking the vast region from India to East Asia in this political climate is the European construction of Buddhism as a universal religion in the nineteenth century.

Based on ancient texts about the Buddha’s teachings, rather than local Buddhist practices and experiences, European Orientalist studies reconstructed an “original” and “pure”

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104 For discussions of the impact of this approach on Buddhism in Japan, see, for example, Sueki Fumihiko, Meiji Shisō-ka ron: Kindia Nihon no Shisō, Saikō I (Tokyo: Toransu Byū, 2004), 11-12. The government, however, failed to institute Shinto to the status of sole religion of the nation in practice, and Buddhism gradually regained its former status. Sueki analyzes that facing the crisis, some Meiji intellectuals reassessed and developed Japanese Buddhist studies.
“Buddhism.”\textsuperscript{105} From this “essence,” the scholarship observed the wide-ranging and diverse contemporary ritual practices across Asia as unified.\textsuperscript{106}

This European construction of Buddhism allowed Okakura to tie Japanese Buddhism to contemporary India, where Buddhism was no longer a significant practice.\textsuperscript{107} In the fifth chapter of the

\textsuperscript{105} Gregory Schopen argues that some early European scholars of Buddhism relied on exclusively classical texts and even rejected archaeological evidence that would have helped explain the daily practices of Buddhists. Then, he points out an analogy between such methodological problems of Buddhist studies and Protestant reformers’ studies of Christianity. See his Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i, 1997), 1-22. King points out that “’pure’ or ‘authentic Buddhism’ became located not in the experiences, lives or actions of living Buddhists in Asia but rather in the university libraries and archives of Europe,” Orientalism and Religion, 150. Indeed, in the early Meiji period, Japanese Buddhist priests had to go to Europe to study Buddhism. For example, Nanjō Bun’yu (1849-1927) from Higashi Honganji temple went to England and studied under Max Müller from 1876 to 1884 before going to India in 1887. For discussions of Meiji Buddhist studies and their relationships to European Buddhist studies, see, for example, Kashiwhara Yūsen, Nihon Bukkyō-shi: Kindai (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1990), 72. Although I am not able to locate specific sources of Buddhist studies for Okakura, it is possible that these European educated Buddhists might bring European knowledge of Buddhism back to Japan, and that Okakura had access to those knowledge.

\textsuperscript{106} Masuzawa, The Invention of World Religions, 126-127. For a discussion of the European invention of arbitrary definitions for “universal religions,” see Masuzawa, The Invention of World Religions, especially chapter 3 “The Birth Trauma of World Religions,” 107-120. She argues that many European religious scholars recognized Buddhism, along with Christianity, as a universal world religion in the nineteenth century primarily because of its “transnationality,” however ambiguous that term was.

\textsuperscript{107} King analyzes a complex process of Orientalist construction of Buddhism in which the Asian Buddhists mimetically reproduced the Orientalist discourse and created their own forms and meanings. Okakura’s deployment can also be seen this perspective. King, Orientalism and Religion, 149, 151.
Ideals, “Buddhism and Indian Art,” Okakura focuses on the distinctive elements and history of Buddhism in ancient India. For him, Buddhism must be understood in the context of the relationships between the Buddha and Indian society:

Essentially, according to both [Northern and Southern] interpretations, the message of Buddha was a message of the Freedom of the Soul, and those who heard were the emancipated children of the Ganges, already drinking to their full of the purity of the Absolute, in their Mahabharata and Upanishads. But beyond its philosophic grandeur, across all the flight of centuries and through the repetitions of both schools alike, we hear the divine voice tremble still with that passion of pity that stood forth in the midst of the most individualistic race in the world, and lifted the dumb beast to one level with man. In face of the spiritual feudalism whereby Caste makes a peasant in all his poverty one of the aristocrats of humanity, we behold him in his infinite mercy, dreaming of the common people as one great heart, standing as the breaker of social bondage, and proclaiming equality and brotherhood to all. It was this second element, so akin to the feeling of Confucian China itself, that distinguished him from all previous developers of Vedic thought, and enabled his teaching to embrace all Asia, if not the whole of humankind.  

Here, Okakura contextualized early Buddhism as the spiritual liberation of Vedic Indic society (the twelfth to sixth  

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108 Okakura, Ideals, 67-68. Okakura divided Buddhism roughly into two schools, Northern and Southern, which correspond to Mahāyāna and Theravada Buddhism.
centuries BCE). The idea of the Buddha as a “reformer” of Brahmanism was already in circulation in European understandings of Buddhism, as analogous to Martin Luther’s Protestantism. As Richard King points out, this view, coupled with “the Hindu characterization of the Buddha as the ninth avatāra of the god Visnu,” can also be seen in the works of modern Hindu leaders, such as Swami Vivekananda, as the “brahmanization of Buddhism.”

Deriving such a view from European, as well as Indian sources, Okakura went on to explain the various sects of Buddhism as expressions of the “universal.” For him, Buddhism embraces “equality and brotherhood to all,” one of the reasons, he argued, why Buddhism could spread through many regions in Asia. Moreover, he strengthened his stance on the universal

109 Vedic society is an ancient Indian society established by the Aryan people, whose religious practices were contained in the Vedas.

110 King, Orientalism and Religion, 144-145. He mentions, as an early example of this view, Charles F. Neumann’s Catechism of the Shamans, 1831.

111 King, Orientalism and Religion, 144.

112 Okakura assumed that early Buddhism inherited Vedic thoughts and was therefore related to Brahmanism despite their differences. For example, in his endnote on the Mahābhārata, he suggested that the Bhagavad Gita, a poem incorporated in the Mahābhārata, “embodies all the essential features of Northern Buddhism,” Okakura, Ideals, 81. Such observations demonstrate the ways in which Okakura attempted to locate Buddhism in the Indian context of Vedic Brahmanism.
appeal of Buddhism by positioning Confucian China as an analog to Buddhism.

Okakura also emphasized the universality of Buddhism in his suggestion of the possible ethnic origins of the Buddha.

Kapilavastu, the place of his [Buddha’s] birth, stands in Nepal, and was in his days even more Turanian than now. Scholars are wont sometimes to claim for him a Tartar origin, for the Sakyas may have been Sakas, or Scythians, and frankly Mongolian type in which the earliest images represent him, as well as the golden or yellow colour of the skin described in the earliest sûtras, and [sic.] remarkable presumptive evidence.¹¹³

Okakura employed contemporary theories on the Buddha’s origins to expand the possibilities for the geographic center of the origins of Buddhism to broader areas of Asia.¹¹⁴ Thus strategically placing Buddhism in a pivotal position, and using

¹¹³ Okakura, Ideals, 68–69.

¹¹⁴ Because Okakura believed that “[Buddhism has] the secret of this inclusion of opposites,” he suggested that Buddhism could possess the power to unite diverse or even opposite cultures, in other words, to unite Asia, Ideals, 66. This reflects the voice of Vivekananda, who claimed the universality of, not Buddhism as in the case of Okakura, but Hinduism.
the European view of Buddhism as universal, he identified characteristics of Asia as a unity.\footnote{His narration of the history of Buddhism in the Indian context also reveals his increasing knowledge of India and its religions. In his Ideals of the East, he mentions Indian literary and philosophical texts, such as the Mahabharata, Upanishads, and Vedas. In addition, his use of Sanskrit terms suggests that he must have gained familiarity with Indic sources. For example, in his description of Buddhist organizations and their differences from other religious forms, Okakura used words that he probably learned in India, such as rishi (sage), sannyasin (religious mendicant), maya (the supernatural power of gods and demons), and gatha (poems to praise the Buddha and bodhisattvas), Okakura, Ideals, 69-71. The use of Indian texts and the new vocabulary indicate his new knowledge of ancient religions in India and reflect his contacts with Indian intellectuals.}

Okakura’s new knowledge of ancient Indian religions as a backdrop for Buddhism is significant because it confirmed his early misgivings about the Indo-Greek style and gave him material to challenge it. Okakura now intertwined religion and art to construct a history for Asian art on the basis of this perceived religious unity. According to Okakura, the art of ancient Vedic society was an important precedent for Buddhist artistic production in the first stage of Buddhist history, which he dated right after the Buddha’s death (Mahaparinirvana) and including the reigns of the two most ardent Buddhist Kings, Asoka (reign c.269-232 BCE) and Kanishka (usually dated to the
late second century).\textsuperscript{116} He declared that early Buddhist art was a “natural growth out of that of the Epic age” and recognized a lineage of ancient Indian art.\textsuperscript{117} At this point, he was able to criticize the Indo-Greek position:

For it is idle to deny the existence of pre-Buddhist Indian art, ascribing its [Buddhist art’s] sudden birth to the influence of the Greeks, as European archaeologists are wont to do.\textsuperscript{118}

Now, Okakura’s doubts about Greek influences in Indian art developed into total refutation:

There is here no trace of the influence of the Greeks, and if it be necessary to establish a relation with any foreign school, it must surely be with that old Asiatic art whose traces are to be found amongst Mesopotamians, Chinese, and Persians, the last of whom are but a branch race of the Indian.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{116} Okakura divided the history of Buddhism into three stages: the first stage is the time of the formation of several schools, from the Nirvana to before the beginning of the Gupta dynasty; the second stage begins with the Gupta dynasty in the fourth century, when Buddhism spread to the south regions of the Indian subcontinent, China, and Japan; the third stage is the era of concrete idealism, beginning in the seventh century. At this stage, Buddhism developed into Lamaism and Tantrikism in Thibet and the Esoteric doctrine in China and Japan. Okakura, Ideals, 71, 78-79.

\textsuperscript{117} Okakura, Ideals, 74.

\textsuperscript{118} Okakura, Ideals, 74.

\textsuperscript{119} Okakura, Ideals, 75-76.
As documents on ancient Indian cultures became available and he gained a deeper understanding, Okakura emphasized India’s relationships to other Asian societies, rather than those outside Asia.

The specific works that Okakura used to assert his position about Indian artistic independence from Greece are the pillars of Asoka, early images of the Buddha, and the remains at Mathura and Gandhara. He admired ancient Indian art and technology as superior to European art and technology.

The lofty iron pillar of Asoka at Delhi—strange marvel of casting, which Europe, with all her scientific mechanism, cannot imitate to-day, like the twelve colossal iron images of Asoka’s contemporary, the Shin Emperor of China, points us to ages of skilled workmanship and vast resources. Too little effort is spent in reconstructing the idea of that great splendour and activity which must have existed, in order to leave such wreckage as it has to a later age.

He declared the existence of skillful artisans and wealth in the Asokan period and emphasized its technical superiority to contemporary Europe; thus, he argued that Indian ancient art

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120 Although Okakura used the term Asokan to describe the iron pillar at Delhi, it is today considered to be from the Gupta period, the fourth to sixth centuries.

121 Okakura, Ideals, 76.
could not be a result of European influence. Here, Okakura not only glorified ancient Indian art, but also suggested that ancient China, not Europe, was comparable to India. By doing so, he eliminated Greek influences from ancient India and, simultaneously, opened up the potential for prosperous civilizations with accomplished arts in ancient Asia.

Okakura then proceeded to classify all ancient Indian art into a single category, “the national school.” For him, early images of the Buddha, the remains of Orissa, Sanchi, and Amaravati, were all “a legitimate development of the national school.”\textsuperscript{122} With this term, he connected a stream of artistic activities through time, all independent from Greek influence.\textsuperscript{123}

For Gandharan sculptures, which are supposed to show the most obvious Greek influences, Okakura suggested an artistic relationship with China rather than Greece:

\textsuperscript{122} Okakura, \textit{Ideals}, 77.

\textsuperscript{123} Without presenting any material evidence, Okakura hypothesized that early images of the Buddha were produced by the Buddha’s immediate disciples. “Images of the Buddha himself, though absent from the early stupas, and now undistinguishable by us among the existing specimens of this early period, may probably have been the first work of his disciples, who soon learned to clothe his memory with the Jataka legends, and to beautify his ideal personality.” In doing so, he tried to fill the gap between the Buddha’s death in the fifth century BCE and the beginning of anthropomorphic presentations of the Buddha in the first to early second centuries. \textit{Ideals}, 77.
The remains of Mathura and Gandhara fall into the general movement, for Kanishka and the Gettaes, in imposing their Mongolian traits on Indian art, could but bring it within the shadow of that common ancient style in which a deeper and better-informed study of the works of Gandhara itself will reveal a greater prominence of Chinese than of the so-called Greek characteristics.\(^{124}\)

Correspondingly, he downplayed the role of Alexander’s expedition bringing Hellenistic influence to South Asia, which, he had heralded as the beginning of Indo-European relations ten years earlier.\(^{125}\)

By replacing Hellenistic influence with Chinese and Persian elements, Okakura emphasized inner-Asia relations and eliminated all Greek elements from ancient Indian civilization.\(^{126}\) The “purity” of the Asian past, as perceived in both Buddhism as a religious philosophy and art, its material expressions, thus became the foundation of Okakura’s Pan-Asianism, and Japan’s

\(^{124}\) Okakura, Ideals, 77-78. Okakura’s inability to specify the Chinese works, however, prompted criticism. As Inoue Shōichi points out, this seemingly impossible suggestion is almost “a slippage of the argument,” Hōryūji, 177-178.

\(^{125}\) Okakura declared: “The Bactrian kingdom in Afghanistan was never more than a small colony in the midst of a great Tartar population, and was already lost in the late centuries before the Christian era. The Alexandrian invasion means rather the extension of Persian influence than of Hellenic culture,” Ideals, 78.

\(^{126}\) Okakura tried to establish two Asian cultural circles: a Northern Asian circle of Tibet, China, and Japan and a Southeast Asian circle of Burma (Myanmar today), Siam (Thailand), and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Both, according to him, shared the “essence” of Buddhism, and India was the common cultural core. Ideals, 79-80.
identity as the sole inheritor of ancient Asian glory. From this political and cultural position, Okakura articulated his desire for India to be “pure” as the origins for Buddhism and Indian art, both of which served as the underpinnings for his characterization of modern Japanese culture. And this is where he found a common agenda with Indian nationalist struggle for their cultural identity. For Okakura, the importance of India as the anchor of this Asian circle never diminished. He concluded, “And now, in spite of the separation of ages, Japan is drawn closer than ever to the motherland of thought [India].”

127 Okakura, Ideals, 80-81.
CHAPTER 3

OKAKURA'S INTEREST IN RÁJENDRALÁLA MITRA
AND THE FERGUSSON–MITRA DEBATES, 1870S–1880S

After returning to Japan from India in October 1902, Okakura presented in his writings and lectures explicit criticism of the British domination of Indian studies. In a 1903 interview for Miyako Shimbun, a newspaper with a general audience especially popular for its emphasis on culture and entertainment, Okakura declared that the height of prosperity for British scholars of South Asia had ended a few decades earlier. Instead, he alerted his readers to the significant
Indian scholars who had emerged recently. It is in this context that he first introduced the Bengali scholar Rájendralála Mitra in Japan. In his perception, figures such as Mitra were replacing British scholars as the foremost intellectual authorities in the field of Indology.

128 In the interview, Okakura declared: “We, Japanese, have been studying India through works of foreign, especially British, scholars. However, their views are very different from ours. First of all, although the authorities in Indian studies had been English scholars, such as Cunningham, Fergusson, and Wilson, their prime was a few decades ago, and since then, there have been no English scholars to succeed to their positions. At present, English scholarship on Indian studies is at a standstill. In India, in the recent four to five years, excellent scholars have emerged, especially among literary studies in the Renaissance-like movement. Especially with Rajendralala Mitra of Bengal as the pioneer, firm research has flourished in new annotations of the Vedas, medieval dramas and songs.” (従来我々が印度の事を研究するには外国学者、殊に英吉利学者の手を経てやって居るけれども、彼等の見る所と我等の観る所とは趣を異にする。第一、印度の事には英吉利学者のカニングハム、フェルゲッソン、ウィルソンなぞの人々が是迄のアウソリチーであったけれども、是等の人の力を尽くしたのは二三十年前であって、其後、英吉利学者の中で継続するものがない。今の英吉利の印度考古学は一頓挫を来たして居る。然るに印度に於ては此の四五年、殊に古物復旧の気運に向って文学部面などに於ては豪らい考證家が出て居る。就中ベンガールのラセンドラ、ミッドラを初めとして碩学大に起り、ヴエダの新注釈だの其他、中古の演劇、歌謡なぞの注解に非常に力を用いて居る。） This is the only instance in which Okakura mentioned Mitra by name. In this quotation, I can see that Okakura highly acclaimed the emergence of Indian scholars and recognized Mitra as a pioneering figure in this movement. Okakura’s evaluation of Mitra’s contribution to Indian studies can also be observed in the following: “It is very interesting and suggesting that they [Indian scholars] have added new knowledge that English scholars could not. The mistranslations of inscriptions and misclassification of styles by English scholars have been corrected. Consequently, the chronology that was compiled by English scholars had to be altered. In addition, against the opinions of English scholars who insisted on Greek influences on India, Indian scholars have found that the influences should be limited only to Bactria and other Greek colonies in north India.” (「古物学の上に於いて英学者以外の智識を立てゝ居って大に面白い、大に味う所がある。是等の事になると従来碑文の読み方、形式の認める方と違った為め外国学者が立てて年代に於ても相違を生じ、又英学者が唱道する印度に於ける希臘の影響の如きも従来創造する如き大方面に渉ったのでない、パクトリア、希臘の移住して居った北天の一部に止る事と認めらるゝに至った。」) Okakura, “Indo Bijutsu Dan” interview by Gentarō Hayashida, Okakura Tenshin Zenshū, 3: 262-264. Originally published in Miyako Shimbun, January 2, 1903.
In this chapter, I argue that Mitra’s works played a significant role in Okakura’s conception of the unity of Asia. Through a close examination of the works of Okakura and Mitra, I attempt to understand the ways in which Okakura may have followed and employed Mitra’s ideas and arguments to further his growing understanding of India, Indian art, and the contemporary political positioning of the Indian past by colonial and nationalist interests. In particular, I compare Mitra’s ideas and strategies, as articulated in his sustained debates with James Fergusson, to those of Okakura as expressed in The Ideals of the East along with his lectures after his Indian trip. I analyze this material to explore how Okakura could have deployed Mitra’s maneuvers toward formulating his own ideological stance, particularly the assertion of an Asian unity. I suggest that Okakura may have found in Mitra an intellectual and political role model.

Okakura probably encountered Mitra’s works for the first time during his Indian journey of 1901-1902 as Mitra’s name had not appeared in his previous works.\(^{129}\) While in India, Okakura

\(^{129}\) Unfortunately Mitra died in 1891, twelve years before Okakura’s Indian journey, and Okakura never had an opportunity to meet him. Thus Okakura knew Mitra only through his books.
stayed with the Tagores, who at this time spearheaded powerful cultural movements for Indian national awareness through the arts. Their elite literary circles read Mitra’s works prolifically, and these nationalist leaders heralded Mitra as a powerful symbolic figurehead and an originary moment for their cause. Rabindranath Tagore, in particular, recognized Mitra’s pioneering role in furthering the nationalist agenda, and avidly read the periodicals he had edited. The wealthy Tagore family possessed copies of Mitra’s books to which Okakura would likely have had access while he was their house-guest. I suggest that Okakura was introduced to Mitra’s works in this political context in Calcutta, as the Indian nationalists turned eagerly to him as a political and intellectual mentor.

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130 The Tagores possessed at least one copy of Mitra’s Indo-Aryans. The collected articles in it mainly dealt with controversial subjects in Indian studies, including Mitra’s side of the arguments in the Fergusson-Mitra debates. Hori Shitoku (堀至徳 1876–1903), a young Buddhist priest of the Shingon sect, accompanied Okakura to India to study Buddhism. Okakura arranged places to stay for Hori through his new Indian acquaintances. Hori first stayed at Belur Math of the Ramakrishna Mission and then moved to Shantiniketan, where Rabindranath Tagore had founded a school (Visva-Bharati University today); Hori then moved to the household of Surendranath Tagore in Kolkata, where Okakura also stayed. In Hori’s diary, the entry for January 2, 1903, when Hori was at Shantiniketan, reads: “Began to read Indo-Aryan by Rajendralal Mitra,” in Kasugai Shinya, “Indo to Nippon 5, Hori Shitoku no Shisō to Shōgai (2),” Bukkyō Daigaku Kenkyū Kiō (Kyoto), no. 56 (1972): 90. Hori was learning Sanskrit and English in order to study Buddhist texts. Indo-Aryans must have been a suitable textbook for learning the English language as well as for learning about ancient Indian civilization. The book was highly praised by the Tagores and existed at the household of the Tagores, which suggests that Okakura also had an opportunity to read this material.
I examine Mitra’s works for the ways in which his ideas and arguments may have helped shape Okakura’s awareness of the political inflections and agendas of British scholarship on India. From reading Mitra and following his moves, in part, Okakura’s sensitivity to the need to understand Indian art on its own terms and in its own cultural conditions seems to have grown significantly. Concurrently his awareness of the problems of trying to understand Indian art by comparing it to Greek art seems to have developed at about this time.

Mitra had already alerted his readership to the fact that any comparison between India and Greece seemed inevitably to lead to the conclusion that Indian culture was derivative, thereby simultaneously asserting the supremacy of European civilization and denigrating the Indian past. Hence the argument offered justification for the colonization of a supposedly inferior population by a superior one. In an attempt to refute such claims, Mitra had argued for the antiquity and authenticity of Indian art, relying largely on Indian literary sources to bolster his case in the absence of sufficient extant material traces from the past. Thus he championed the understanding of an Indian past free from Greek influence. In
this he was a pioneering figure. It is no surprise therefore
that he was embraced as an intellectual giant by successive
generations in Bengal, including the Tagores, and as a pivotal
figurehead for offering incisive strategies and direction for
their efforts to conceptualize and define an India independent
of, and before, Europe. In this way, Mitra captured their
imagination, and his prolific and fiery writings featured
prominently in the mobilization of the burgeoning nationalist
movements in Bengal, leaving a profound legacy after his death.

Okakura’s understanding of the politics of positioning
Indian art, as played out between colonial and emergent
nationalist interests, such as those embodied by Fergusson and
Mitra, developed in this context. Okakura’s growing awareness
of these tensions ultimately persuaded him to change his mind
and disclaim the significance of Greece on Indian art. Okakura
thus seems to have keenly followed this debate with a particular
focus on Mitra’s marshaling of resources toward his refutation
of Greek supremacy and for his endeavor to craft an alternate
position. I argue further that Okakura was highly attentive to
Mitra’s strategies, while carefully observing the rhetorical
moves of nationalist and colonialist agendas. The
particularities of opposed interpretations and positions shaped these agendas as much as they were shaped by them. Focusing on the questions of agency and roles as he read Mitra’s writings, he was able to re-deploy them to fashion his own understanding of Asian identity during the first decade of the twentieth century.

Rájendralála Mitra’s Contribution to Indian Nationalism

Okakura and the Indian nationalists of the early twentieth century turned to Rájendralála Mitra because he was one of the earliest “native” historians of Indian civilization.131 With his exceptional language skills in Bengali, English, Sanskrit, Pali, and Persian, Mitra had joined the Asiatic Society of Bengal as its librarian and assistant secretary in 1846. Founded by Sir

131 Mitra was born in Sura, an eastern suburb of Kolkata, to a family of the kayastha caste. Mitra displayed precocious intelligence, drawing the attention of Dwarkanath Tagore, one of the city’s most prominent businessmen and the grandfather of the poet laureate, Rabindranath. Dwarkanath wanted to send Mitra to England for higher education and repeatedly offered financial support when Mitra was still a student. Mitra’s family, however, did not accept the offer. For further biographical studies on Mitra, see Sisir Kumar Mitra, “Raja Rajendralal Mitra,” in Historians and Historiography in Modern India, ed. S. P. Sen (Calcutta: Institute of Historical Studies, 1973), 1-14; Kalyan Kumar Dasgupta, Indian Historiography and Rajendralala Mitra (Calcutta: Satchidananda Prakashani, 1976); S. K. Saraswati, “Raja Rajendralal Mitra,” in Rajendralala Mitra (150th Anniversary Lectures) (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1978), 34-47; and Upinder Singh, The Discovery of Ancient India: Early Archaeologists and the Beginnings of Archaeology (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 322-334.
William Jones in 1784, the Asiatic Society offered Mitra invaluable resources to pursue his interest in ancient Indian civilizations. It was the foremost repository for British-discovered ancient Indian objects and manuscripts and hence a vital site for knowledge production at this vibrant historical moment. Because eminent scholars, including Alexander Cunningham, gathered here, it offered a venue for vibrant intellectual exchange. Thus Mitra had the advantage of access to primary material about ancient India to study firsthand, as well as the opportunity to observe at close quarters how British scholars used this material to shape their arguments and views of India. In so doing, he created for himself a unique vantage point from which to compare his own readings of primary sources with the narratives of colonial authorities as they were being formulated. He seems to have effectively used his location at the Society to uncover their strategies and learn from their moves to create his own refutation of their position and ultimately to present an alternative stand of his own.

As Mitra began to demonstrate his scholarly abilities in print, European or other Indian intellectuals could not ignore his strong presence in the field. His descriptive catalogues of
the collection of the Society and editions of ancient texts began with *A Descriptive Catalogue of Curiosities in the Museum of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* in 1849.\textsuperscript{132} In this corpus of writings, he articulated his interpretation of the sources and clearly laid out his position. Even after he left the Society in 1856, he maintained his research affiliation with the institution and its scholarly community.\textsuperscript{133} In addition to paleographical studies, he gradually expanded his expertise to archaeological, numismatic, and literary material and approaches. He published numerous works, including *The Antiquities of Orissa* (1875 and 1880), *Buddha Gayá: the Hermitage of Śákya Míni* (1878), and *Indo-Aryan* (1881).\textsuperscript{134} In 1885, he became the first “native”

\textsuperscript{132} For a list of Mitra’s works, see Dasgupta, Appendix 1.

\textsuperscript{133} Mitra left the Society to take the position of Director of the Wards Institute, a school for the sons of landowners founded by the British government.

president of the Society, which was still dominated mostly by Europeans.\textsuperscript{135}

In addition to these academic achievements, Mitra’s activities in several emergent Indian cultural and political organizations positioned him as a national leader. They provided him with multiple venues to test and also publicly disseminate his ideas as he developed them through his works at the Asiatic Society. He was the editor for widely-circulating periodicals promoting Bengali literature, including \textit{Vividhartha Sangraha} and \textit{Rahasya-Sandarbha}.\textsuperscript{136} He also joined the Society for the Promotion of Industrial Art. In addition, he strived to reform the British administrative system in India as an active member of the British Indian Association, an early political association for the Indian people, which he guided as its

\begin{itemize}
\item In 1829 the Asiatic Society had begun to admit some Indian members even though it was predominantly European. After Mitra, in 1886, the next president was again a European. See the Asiatic Society, \textit{Time Past and Time Present: Two Hundred and Twenty-Five Years of the Asiatic Society} (Kolkata: the Asiatic Society, 2008), 25.
\item \textit{Vividhartha Sangraha} (1851–1861) was an illustrated monthly magazine about history, natural sciences, art, and literature. \textit{Rahasya-Sandarbha} (1862–1869) was also a monthly magazine, supported by the Vernacular Literature Society and Calcutta School Book Society. On these publications and Mitra’s role in shaping them, see S. K. Mitra, 9–10; Dasgupta, 23–24.
\end{itemize}
president from 1881. As his thinking gathered momentum, he thus established an extensive audience through this range of social, political, and scholarly institutions.

Mitra’s academic works were perceived as politically powerful among both his European critics and the younger generations of Indian nationalists. His European opponents pointed to his ambitious and energetic cultural and political activism to discredit his academic qualifications. They emphasized the political reasons for Mitra’s arguments for the originality of ancient Indian architecture rather than evaluate the scholarly evidence that he presented. In their assessment, Mitra’s arguments lacked an objective, scientific stance, which they prized as the standard for reliable scholarship. While decried by his detractors, it was precisely his nationalistic agenda and deliberate cultivation of multiple audiences that attracted a wide readership among Bengali political intellectuals. It is in the context of these volatile political assessments that Mitra’s works eventually became available to Okakura.

\[137\] For Mitra’s activities outside academics, see R.C. Majumdar, “Rajendralal Mitra as a National Leader,” in Rajendrala Mitra (150th Anniversary Lectures), 1-23; B.N. Mukherjee, “Rajendralal Mitra and His Contemporaries,” in Rajendrala Mitra (150th Anniversary Lectures), 48-69.
**The Fergusson-Mitra Controversy, 1870s - 1880s**

Among Mitra’s prodigious contributions to Indian studies, the most important one for my purposes here is his position regarding the originality of Indian architecture and the controversy it caused in relation to that of James Fergusson, a Scottish antiquarian of India.\(^{138}\) Fergusson’s emphasis on the Greek origins of Indian lithic architecture ignited a heated response from Mitra. In turn, Mitra’s refutation of Fergusson, I suggest, triggered Okakura’s skepticism about the European agenda pervading contemporary Indological scholarship. As discussed in the previous chapter, Fergusson’s conceptualization of Indian architectural history had puzzled Okakura. In his later reflections on the topic, Okakura employed similar

\(^{138}\) Fergusson first arrived in India for business but quickly became interested in Indian antiquities. He traveled extensively between 1835 and 1842 to archaeological sites to study their extant remains. He published the results of these research trips, which, in turn, consolidated Fergusson’s reputation as one of the foremost authorities of Indian architectural history. These works include *Tree and Serpent Worship or Illustrations of Mythology and Art in India in the First and Fourth Centuries after Christ From the Sculptures of the Buddhist Topes at Sanchi and Amravati* (1868; reprint, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2004); *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (1876; reprint, edited and with additions by James Burgess and R. Phene Spiers, London: John Murray, 1910; reprint, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1998); *The Cave Temples of India* (co-authored with James Burgess, 1880; reprint, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2000); and *Archaeology in India with Special Reference to the Works of Babu Rajendralala Mitra* (1884; reprint, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1999).
strategies to those Mitra had used previously to challenge the standard Eurocentric viewpoint of his times.

Fergusson had proposed that stone architecture did not exist in India until the age of Asoka, that is, the third century BCE, following the Indo-Greek encounter. This position, in turn, allowed him to declare that stone construction in India commenced from Greek influence.139 His viewpoint rapidly became the subject of a sustained and bitter conflict with Mitra, who defended the originality of ancient Indian architecture, free from Greek influence.140 In his Antiquities of Orissa (1875), Mitra first outlined his position, claiming indigenous origins for Indian stone architecture. He explicitly and frequently

139 These assertions occur in numerous publications, including Fergusson and Taylor Meadows, Architecture at Beejapoor, an Ancient Mahometan Capital in the Bombay Presidency (London: J. Murray, 1866), 87, and Fergusson, Tree and Serpent Worship, 85. The following assertion in Beejapoor, “we know that no stone architecture existed in India till the Greeks taught them the use of the more durable material” (87), drew the attention of Mitra, Antiquities, 14. All citations from Mitra’s Antiquities refer to the 2007 reprint.

targeted Fergusson to levy his criticism of European, and particularly British colonial, biases toward the Indian past.\textsuperscript{141} In the first chapter, Mitra noted that Fergusson’s position was based exclusively on the fact that remains of stone buildings datable to pre-Asokan times had not been discovered. Thus, while Fergusson attributed the commencement of stone architecture in India to Greek contact in pre-Asokan times, Mitra refuted him by opening up the possibility that such buildings may not remain standing for various social, religious, and political reasons.\textsuperscript{142} Further, Mitra interpreted the skillfully hewn, polished, and adorned Asokan pillars as evidence of the maturity of stone technology in the third century BCE. In so doing, he implicitly placed the origins of such practice prior to Asoka’s reign and thereby challenged Fergusson’s assumption that they were the product of Greek influence.\textsuperscript{143} He argued that their sophisticated style and technique could not possibly represent a primitive or beginning stage of architecture. Moreover, having examined their

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\textsuperscript{141} Mitra, \textit{Antiquities}, especially chapter 1, 13–26.
\textsuperscript{142} Mitra, \textit{Antiquities}, 15.
\textsuperscript{143} Mitra, \textit{Antiquities}, 15–16.
\end{flushleft}
proportions, bases, and ornamentation, Mitra found “nothing of the Doric, Ionic, or Corinthian columns” in these lithic remains from Asokan times. Therefore, he concluded that by the time of Asoka, India had already developed its own styles and technologies in stone architecture. Thus, while acknowledging the scarcity of extant evidence for ancient stone architecture prior to Alexander, he challenged Fergusson’s fundamental premise.

Mitra levied a second criticism against Fergusson’s position on stylistic grounds. Fergusson had observed that the stone façade of the Lomas Rishi Cave at Barabar Hills (c.250 BCE, Figure 3-1) was probably a literal copy of a wooden structure, reasoning that its beams and lattice doorframe could only have been functional in wood. He asserted that these architectural

\[144\] Mitra, Antiquities, 16. He went further to deny Egyptian and Assyrian connections to support his claim for indigenously developed expertise, 17-18.

\[145\] In 1881, when he later revised and reprinted this chapter in Indo-Aryans, Mitra added a piece of newly discovered evidence. Quoting from Cunningham, Mitra pointed out that the Baithak of Jarasandha, a rectangular stone, also called Pippala Cave, near Rajgir in Bihar, and the walls of old Rājagriha (modern Rajgir) could be dated to before the fifth century BCE. See Mitra, Indo-Aryans, 17-19, referencing Cunningham’s Archaeological Survey of India, vol. III, Report for the Year 1871-72 (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1873), 142-3. Dating the remains at early Buddhist sites continues to be an ongoing debate today. On this particular site and its dating issues, see, for example, Dilip K. Chakrabarti, “Rajagriha: An Early Historic Site in East India,” World Archaeology 7, no. 3 (1976): 261-268.
elements were produced by people who had just begun to work in stone because their styles still reflected elements that could have been worked better in wood.\footnote{Fergusson, \textit{Lecture on Indian Architecture}, 9; cited in Mitra, \textit{Antiquities}, 14.} Hence he deduced that they had not yet developed styles integral to the material properties of stone. This observation, in turn, allowed Fergusson to argue that the façade was constructed after Greek contact, during what he called the transitional period from wooden to stone architecture, which he dated to the third century BCE. Instead, Mitra posited that these architectural elements were an original form in wood, which could very well have survived even after the transition to stone was achieved. He offered a variety of reasons for his interpretation, including a spirit of conservatism, a mannerism, and a survival of older practices. By way of analogy, he pointed to the Greek “triglyph,” which
survived in wood and stone simultaneously, even after it had lost its original function in wooden construction.\footnote{Forms of wooden structures copied in stone architecture can be seen at other cave monasteries dated later than Fergusson’s “transitional period,” the third century BCE. These include the Karle monastery (c. 50–75 CE), the Ajanta Caves (c. 462–500 CE), and the Kanheri Caves (the third century CE). Fergusson explained these as indications of the contemporaneous use of wood and stone for a long time and of the Indian practice of continuing to copy original wooden forms in stone. In contrast, Mitra used these examples to strengthen his argument that original practices in wooden forms could survive in stone for a long time even after they lost their functions, Mitra, Antiquities, 23.}

Mitra next attacked another underlying assumption, that the expedition of Alexander to India in 327 BCE was the moment of contact between Greek and Indian cultures. He also addressed the common assumption among many European scholars of the nineteenth century that Alexander had left behind Greek and other foreign artists in South Asia after his retreat.\footnote{Mitra also noted a similar premise in Charlotte Speir Manning, Ancient and Mediaeval India, 2 vols. (1869; reprint, Boston: Adamant Media Corporation, 2006).} Mitra pointed to the lack of any evidence that Alexander had brought architects and workmen with him to India.\footnote{Mitra, Antiquities, 16, quoting Manning (no pages specified).} Furthermore, he noted that the fact that Alexander stayed in India only for a few months suggested that his troops did not have enough time to establish, or “teach,” the techniques that could have allowed colonial-period European scholars to claim Greek origins for the...
foundations of the architecture extant in India. Assimilating elements from a different culture, Mitra conjectured, would have required far more time than Alexander or any of his successors spent in the region. Mitra thereby challenged the dominant nineteenth-century theory regarding the Greek origins of stone architecture in India from yet another vantage point.

Having refuted the prevailing European position of the day, Mitra proceeded to marshal his expertise in ancient Sanskrit literature to date the genesis of Indian stone architecture far earlier than the arrival of Alexander. Criticizing earlier and contemporary European scholars for misreading these ancient texts, he combed through them to present literary evidence to support his claims. He turned to a variety of textual sources, including the Rig Veda, the earliest surviving collection of Sanskrit hymns, dated as early as the second millennium BCE; The Grammar of Panini, a book of

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150 Mitra, Antiquities, 16.

151 Contemporary Indian scholars questioned Mitra’s skills at reading Sanskrit texts and condemned his methods for using this material. According to Rabindranath Tagore’s memoirs, they disapproved of his approach on the ground that his scholarship was not entirely original. Moreover, they charged that, like many of his European contemporaries, Mitra may have employed pundits, traditional Indian scholars, to read the Sanskrit texts for him, without acknowledging their contribution to his interpretation. Rabindranath Tagore, My Reminiscences (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), 231-235.
Sanskrit rules and definitions, usually dated before the sixth century BCE; and the Indic epics, the *Ramayana*, usually dated to the mid-first millennium BCE and the *Mahabharata*, dated between the mid-first millennium BCE and the mid-first millennium CE.\textsuperscript{152}

To support the existence of stone buildings in ancient times and thereby refute Fergusson’s point about the absence of permanent forms prior to Greek contact, he noted the abundance of technical terminology in these texts that suggested knowledge of stone architectural elements and descriptions of urban formations that imply elaborate permanent architecture.

Architectural terms like *ishitaka* (bricks), *stambha* (pillars), *bhaskara* (sculptors), and *attalika* (buildings) in *Panini*, he argued, suggested at the very least the existence of brick, if not stone, before Asoka. Mitra therefore extrapolated from this terminology indirect evidence for permanent architectural

\textsuperscript{152} Drawing on previous scholarship offering several dates for *The Grammar of Panini*, Mitra narrowed these down to two possibilities: between the ninth and the eleventh centuries BCE, as proposed by the German scholar, Theodor Goldstücker (1821-1872), and the sixth century BCE, as offered by the philologist Max Müller (1823-1900). Then Mitra concluded that whether the text dates from the eleventh century BCE or the sixth century BCE, it was “at least three centuries anterior to the limit fixed by Mr. Fergusson for the origin of Indian architecture,” Mitra, *Antiquities*, 18, see also footnote “§.” Although Mitra admitted that the present forms of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* might have been completed much later than the age of Asoka, he assumed that their narrative elements could be dated “long before the reign of Asoka,” or “very probably from before the date of Buddha himself,” Mitra, *Antiquities*, 19.
construction techniques and sophisticated forms. This evidence enabled him to reject the general European scholarly assumption and argue that complex, refined, and elegant buildings did indeed exist prior to the arrival of the Greeks in the subcontinent.  

Mitra therefore proposed to examine a cultural formation by turning to its internal sources and attending to the perspective of the communities that had created and experienced the practices under consideration. In his words:

But whatever the origin or the age of ancient Indian architecture, looking to it as a whole it appears perfectly self-evolved, self-contained, and independent of all extraneous admixture. It has its peculiar rules, its proportions, its particular feature, ---all bearing impress of a style that has grown from within, ---a style which expresses in itself what the people, for whom, and by whom, it was designed, thought, and felt, and meant, and not what was supplied to them by aliens in creed, colour and race. A few insignificant ornaments apart, its

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153 Similarly, in the epics, Mitra found “descriptions of temples, two-storied buildings, balconies, porticos, triumphal arches, enclosing walls, flights of stone masonry steps in tanks,” which he offered as evidence of flourishing architectural traditions prior to the arrival of the Greeks in the region. He noted that the Mahabharata offered many allusions to lofty buildings and decorated mansions. Likewise, in the Ramayana, Mitra found a description of a palace, which had “an upper window” and further pointed to some words that suggested the existence of stone architecture. In the Rig Veda, Mitra examined descriptions of the cities of the Asuras, a group of deities of demonic character. He found the words for “the vast, spacious iron-walled cities of the Asuras,” “a hundred cities of stone,” “a city made of iron,” and “a three-storied dwelling.” Mitra concluded that the authors of the Vedas surely possessed “knowledge of something more substantial than wattle and mud,” Antiquities, 19-21.
merits and its defects are all its own, and the different forms it has assumed in different provinces are all modifications, or adaptations to local circumstances, of one primitive idea. It may, therefore, be treated by itself without reference to foreign art.\textsuperscript{154}

These words demonstrate how Mitra’s view and approach differed from and flagrantly challenged European scholars, whose methods were predominantly comparative, seeking familiar Greek elements in newly encountered cultural practices as the criteria to determine their assessment of an unfamiliar culture.\textsuperscript{155} The latter approach, Mitra made clear, failed to recognize the originality of Indic forms and to appreciate local formations and distinctive variations that arise as these interact. Instead, he championed careful visual analysis of extant forms to extrapolate evidence for a bigger picture of the characteristic practices of a community.\textsuperscript{156} Through this approach, he was able to defend the originality of Indic culture,

\textsuperscript{154} Mitra, \textit{Antiquities}, 23.

\textsuperscript{155} Bernard S. Cohn analyzes British colonialism as a cultural project in which the British observation of India and Indians was “mediated by particular socio-political contexts as well as historically specific aesthetic principles,” \textit{Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge}, 6-7.

\textsuperscript{156} To avoid the mistake of seeing influence where it might not have taken place, Mitra proposed that scholars of India should analyze “the details, the technical treatment, and general arrangement and style execution” and not the commonality of subjects, which could not prove any original-copy relations, \textit{Buddha Gayá}, 171.
independent of any “admixture” that might have diluted or tainted the authenticity he desired. Here he is responding to the European value placed on an imagined purity that had allowed European scholars to locate the legitimacy of European civilization as a “pure” descendant of ancient and glorious Greek civilization and to simultaneously devalue the colonial material encountered during conquest and grasped through such assessment criteria as inevitably lesser.\footnote{157}{Cohn argues that through their historiographic practices, British historians of India formed a legitimizing discourse regarding Britain’s civilizing mission in India. See his \textit{Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge}, 5-6.}

In reply, Fergusson relied exclusively on visual evidence. He turned to plans and styles, which he could study to understand the architecture of any region, without needing to delve into its language, culture, and history.\footnote{158}{Tapati Guha-Thakurta argues that Fergusson saw ancient sites in India with the European visual framework of the contemporary picturesque painting of Roman ruins and that he further pursued the scientific objectivity of the images of the lithograph plates in his books. See “The Empire and Its Antiquities: Two Pioneers and Their Scholarly Fields,” in \textit{Monuments, Objects, Histories}, especially 5-12.} Without responding to Mitra’s main points, Fergusson focused on Mitra’s methods in his counterattack. First, he objected that Mitra relied on “untrustworthy” texts from ancient India, and second, that Mitra’s research was not “scientific” enough for European
Emphasizing the importance of the "scientific" quality of architectural studies, as did his peers in England, Fergusson minimized the importance of Mitra’s contribution to the archaeological study of India because of the latter’s standards.¹⁵⁹ For Fergusson’s criticism of Mitra’s use of ancient texts, see his History, preface, viii. For an example of Fergusson’s distrust of Indian texts themselves, see his dating of the Sun Temple at Kanaruc (Konarak), History, 426-7. All citations from Fergusson’s History refer to the original edition of 1876. Fergusson explicitly rejected Mitra’s research on Orissan architecture as “not scientific” enough in his History, 416 n. 1. This footnote was deleted in the 1910 revised edition, probably by the editors. Other examples of Fergusson’s criticism of Mitra’s “scientific” quality can be seen in his discussion of Mitra’s treatment of temple plans, measurements, and dimensions of the architectural remains, which, Fergusson claimed, was “inadequate” and “inaccurate,” History, 417 n. 3, 421 n. 1, and 436 n. 1.
alleged lack of scientific grounding. In keeping with the post-Enlightenment European claim to rationality, Fergusson did not expect “native” scholars to possess this highly prized

160 Fergusson’s insistence on being “scientific” resonates with the contemporary preoccupation with the scientific quality of architectural studies among British academics in the field. When the Royal Institute of British Architects was established in 1834, one of its purposes was to study architecture both as an art and a science. The founder, Thomas Leverton Donaldson, declared the aim of the institution: “To uphold in ourselves, the character of Architects, as Men of Taste, Men of Science, Men of Honour,” cited in J. Mordaunt Crook, “Architecture and History,” Architectural History 27 (1984): 556. See also Fergusson, History, 416 n. 1. This emphasis on the scientific study of architecture resulted, in part, from the post-Enlightenment conceptualization of the development of human history as a rational and scientific progression. Incorporated into the British Romantic approach toward the remote past, it was applied to the study of Greece and Rome and also ancient Indian architecture. Accurate measurements and documentations of ancient remains were essential for such scientific study as they revealed the classical orders and their development in Greek architecture. For Fergusson as well, the scientific study of architecture meant collecting accurate data of measurements, drawings, and plans, by which he could construct his history of Indian architectural styles. While some European Orientalists discovered the ancient glory of Indian civilization through its texts, monuments, numismatics, etc., the glory in the remote past was often used to emphasize the “backwardness” of the present state of Indian technology and science. Fergusson’s prejudice against Mitra’s acumen and training as a scholar must be situated in this dialogue in the colonial conditions of mid-nineteenth century India. For a discussion of British scientific archaeology in India, see Mitter, Much Maligned Monster, especially “India and the Rise of Scientific Archaeology,” 140-170. For European views toward India in the ages of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, see for example, Wilhelm Halbfass, “Deism, the Enlightenment, and the Early History of Indology” and “India and the Romantic Critique of the Present,” chapters 4 and 5 in India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding (New York: State University of New York, 1988), 54-83; and Michael Adas, Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), especially 95-108 and 166-177. For the relationship between scientific knowledge and the picturesque in furthering colonialism, both military conquest and also knowledge formation processes, see Nicholas B. Dirks, “Guiltless Spoliations: Picturesque Beauty, Colonial Knowledge, and Colin Mackenzie’s Survey of India,” in Perceptions of South Asia’s Visual Past, 211-232.
Concurrently, Fergusson defended his own research methods as relying on the infallibility of the extant record in stone. His lack of knowledge of local traditions and languages, however, did not allow him to formulate any comprehensive or conclusive rebuttal of Mitra’s claims.

Their opposed positions represent a typical but fundamental contrast and conflict of rhetoric and interests between colonizers and the colonized in the second half of the nineteenth century. Fergusson upheld rationality, objectivity, science, and technology as superior methods; Mitra focused on tradition and heritage as the grounds for essence and authenticity. Refusing to accept the Greco-Euro-centric rhetoric, in other words, meant establishing a new center and national identity on the basis of longstanding indigenous

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161 His bias is reflected in his discussion of a woodcut plan of the Jagannatha temple at Puri, for example. Fergusson’s footnote reads as follows: “The plan ... made by an intelligent native assistant to the Public Works Department, named Radhica Pursâd Mukerji, ... the only plan I ever found done by a native sufficiently correct to be used, except as a diagram, or after serious doctoring.” By introducing the only acceptable plan by a native assistant, Fergusson disclosed his general distrust of Indian scholarship. Implied here is his conviction about Mitra’s inability to gather and assess architectural data to the rigorous standards to which Fergusson perceives himself as adhering, History, 430 n. 2.

162 Later, however, Fergusson admitted that there was at least one example of a stone structure that could be dated before the Greek contact, Cave Temples, 33. He noted that Cunningham’s report suggested that the Jarasandha-ka-Baithak, near Rajgir in Bihar, could be dated to the time of Alexander’s visit to India. See Cunningham, Survey, vol. III, 142-3.
tradition and heritage. This is the lesson Okakura seems to have discerned as he followed the debates between Fergusson and Mitra, and it was an experience that he wanted to reproduce in Japan.

The conflict between Fergusson and Mitra culminated in Fergusson’s publication of *Archaeology in India with Special Reference to the Works of Babu Rajendralala Mitra* (1884). Here Fergusson explicitly addressed the volatile political climate in which both scholars were working, fueling it as much as they were responding to it.\(^{163}\) Fergusson also disparaged and defamed Mitra’s intentions at a personal level. He protested that he was a victim of Mitra’s malicious intent to obtain fame by attacking eminent masters.\(^{164}\) He claimed that the rising nationalist movements against British rule had created conditions under which no European living in India “was safe

\(^{163}\) His response echoes current political movements in Bengal, such as the discussions surrounding the controversies generated by the Ilbert Bill (1883), which allowed Indian judges to preside at courts over crimes committed by Europeans. British refusal to submit to the jurisdiction of natives had become quite controversial by the time Fergusson published this book. It is possible to interpret his work as a declaration of his political position in this dispute and also as a justification of it by way of rating Indian intellectuals poorly and undermining the reputation of Mitra as a political leader. Okakura might have been interested in the discussions of the Ilbert Bill because extraterritoriality in Japan had been one of the major concerns of the Japanese government as well as Japanese intellectuals until it was abolished in 1894.

against its attack.”\textsuperscript{165} The polarization of their positions and the intensely personal invective here attests to the binarisms that had entered the official debates of the second half of the nineteenth century.

At the turn of the century in Calcutta, the Fergusson-Mitra debates attracted keen interest, as their works circulated among nationalist circles. Mitra had acquired a considerable reputation as a scholar from this renewed attention and the reassessment of his writings in the ideological debates of this time. Rabindranath Tagore, in particular, took interest in Mitra’s literary and political contributions. When spearheading an ambitious project with his brother Jyotirindranath to translate Western academic terms into the Bengali language to promote education in India, they put Mitra at the top of their list of “the men of letters of repute.”\textsuperscript{166} Reflecting upon his meetings with Mitra, Rabindranath idealized Mitra as “the

\textsuperscript{165} Fergusson, Archaeology, 4.

\textsuperscript{166} Here Mitra is placed alongside such Bengali luminaries of the second half of the nineteenth century as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, a pioneering visionary and erudite educator (1820-1891), and the famous poet and novelist, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838-1894), R. Tagore, My Reminiscences, 231-235.
valiant fighter." He expressed unreserved admiration for Mitra not only as a profound scholar, but also as an energetic activist in public life. Tagore even went on to defend his role model from the criticism levied by fellow Indians that his scholarship was not entirely original in the sense that he employed pandits to read Sanskrit texts for him without explicitly acknowledging their contribution.

By the time Okakura arrived in Calcutta, the elite nationalist intellectuals had already identified and embraced Mitra as their role model for scholar-activists. Rabindranath and the other equally luminous members of the family must have introduced Okakura to Mitra’s works as resources for both

\[167\] R. Tagore, *My Reminiscences*, 231-235. Although Rabindranath did not explicitly state the date of their meetings, we can reconstruct these from the fact that he visited Mitra at the Wards Institute, where Mitra served as the director from 1856 to 1880. Mitra published a pamphlet, *A Scheme for the Rendering of European Scientific Terms into the Vernaculars of India* (Calcutta: Thacker Spink & Co., 1877), which might be related to this translation project of the Tagore brothers. For this publication, see Deepak Kumar, "The ‘Culture’ of Science and Colonial Culture, India 1820-1920," *The British Journal for the History of Science* 29, no. 2 (June 1996): 195-209; Michael S. Dodson, "Translating Science, Translating Empire: The Power of Language in Colonial North India," *Comparative Study of Society and History* 47, no.4 (October 2005): 809-835.

understanding ancient Indian art and for conceptualizing and articulating their shared nationalist agendas.¹⁶⁹

Familiar with Fergusson’s works, but not entirely convinced by them at the time of his arrival in Calcutta, Okakura seems to have found Mitra’s approach and his conclusions equally valuable for furthering his own formulation of Pan-Asianism. Fergusson’s explicit hostility toward Indian intellectuals must have alerted Okakura to the political biases of European scholarship. The schism surely drew his attention to the political agendas undergirding their conflicting positions. He did not miss the larger ramifications of Mitra’s rejection of the Greek and Euro-centric worldview along with its derogatory assessment of India: his rejection had allowed him to locate a new center and national identity on the basis of Indic practices and belief systems. Okakura found here an approach and logic that he could replicate in Japan to further his own ends. After returning to Japan, his works disclose a critical reconceptualization of Indian art as the fountainhead of Asia. In time, he proposed a new periodization based on Mitra’s

¹⁶⁹ At least one copy of Mitra’s work, Indo-Aryans, was circulating in the Tagore household, and it would likely have been available to their Japanese guest. See Hori’s diary, published in Kasugai, “Indo to Nippon 5,” 90.
research, and, geographically (in space), he re-centered the origins of Indian art in the eastern side of the nation. This spatiotemporal reorientation would surely have been a way, to Okakura, to remap India in its own terms.

**Okakura’s Deployment of Mitra’s Approach and Material**

A comparison of Mitra’s works with Okakura’s formulation of the agency of India in his construction of a Pan-Asian identity with Japan at the center suggests that he recognized their shared positions in the European-dominated cultural politics of the early twentieth century in the region. Okakura clearly drew on Mitra’s arguments to strengthen his position and also deployed analogous strategies to make his case. His later refutation of the Greek origins of Indian art, his formulation of inner-Asian relations, his use of ancient literary works to justify that position, and his emphasis on the need to turn to internal sources to study a culture as the alternative to a Greco-Euro-centric approach demonstrate his affinity for Mitra’s political position, scholarly approach, and research.

The most important outcome of Okakura’s reading of Mitra is his realization that Indian scholars were beginning to play a
major role in the shaping of Indian art history as a field and that political agendas were driving their differences with British scholarship. This understanding became manifest in the lectures and informal talks that he gave after his return to Japan in 1902. At the end of that year, his presentation for Shigakukai (史学会, the Historical Society of Japan), for example, focused on the state of recent scholarship on Indian art history.\textsuperscript{170} Here he introduced his firsthand observations that Indian scholars were replacing British scholars. He clearly outlined their differences of opinions in the shaping of nationalistic politics in India, with which he personally identified.

Indian art had been thought to be in the Indo-Greek style. However, we should take the opinions of Indian historians, not Max Muller or other European scholars. Although the British government is encouraging art and its research, it is difficult for them to reach any conclusions.\textsuperscript{171}

\textsuperscript{170} Shigakukai was established in 1889 by the first generation of historians in the Meiji period, including Shigeno Yasutsugu and Mikami Sanji, who were affiliated with both the governmental project for compiling a national history and the University of Tokyo. Shigakukai has been and continues to be one of the major academic organizations for historical studies, and its membership is open to anyone who is interested in history.

\textsuperscript{171} Okakura, “Shigakukai Sekijō no Indo Kenkyū-dan,” (1902; reprint in Okakura Tenshin Zenshu, 3), 266.
He alerted his Japanese audience to the disputes waged over the interpretation of the history of Indian art between European and Indian scholars and explicitly allied himself with the latter. That Okakura had thought through the politics of European scholarship on India is suggested in a dinner conversation after the Shigakukai talk in 1902:

You may think that the Indians are wretched, but they are not actually. There are some people of high courage. Finally, recently, the Indians themselves established an academic field of studying their ancient history. Their studies are serious, and many of them are firmly convincing. The Europeans studied the close relationships between Europe and India, for example, the “Indo-European language” or “Indo-Aryan race.” However, this could be sometimes a political means for the British government to make Indians believe that they should remain under the British rule. So, when you study India, believing in the close relations between the Indians and the Aryans could lead you to a harmful result.\^172

Okakura’s understanding of the political motivation of European scholars was likely consolidated from following the Fergusson-
Mitra dispute. Indian “people of high courage” may have included Mitra’s formative generation of nationalist scholars as well as the next set of Indian nationalists with whom Okakura had personally become acquainted in India. Warning Japanese scholars against uncritically accepting Euro-American scholarship on Asia, Okakura was now trying to convey the voice of Indian scholars who were struggling to establish a new historical identity for India, divergent from British colonial representations of the Indian past.

Drawing upon the new nationalist scholarship on Indian art, Okakura denied the Greek origins of Indian art and instead emphasized inner-Asia relations, a stance which gave him a firm foundation for his construct of Asian unity. Clearly articulated in his The Ideals of the East, as examined in my second chapter, he repeated in the Shigakukai presentation, that he shared Mitra’s position regarding the indigenous origin of Indian art. Relying on Mitra’s proposition, Okakura now claimed that the history of Indian art predated the moment of Greek contact, contrary to the European accounts. Furthermore, advancing Mitra’s ideas, Okakura emphasized the close relationships among Asian cultures in stark contrast to the
Greco-centric view. Okakura set the earliest stage for Indian art by dating extant remains to the time of the Buddha (the sixth century BCE to the fourth century BCE) and emphasized Persian and Chinese influence, rather than that of Greek art:  

It has been wrongly said that the history of India starts with the import of the Greco-Roman cultures. Therefore, excluding Greco-Roman influence on India from our argument required a lot of effort to establish a new historical periodization. We had to reorganize history based on our assertion that Greco-Roman influence stopped in Punjab, and did not go any further.  

Hence he geographically limited Greco-Roman impact to the Punjab (a region shared between India and Pakistan today), at the northwestern end of the sub-continent. Through this strategic move, he was able to dissociate it from the heartland of South Asia, which, he went on to suggest, maintained contact with other regions of Asia further east, including China: 

The railings at Bodh-Gaya and the tower, the railings, and other remains at Barhut were built by King Kanishka. They are in the Asokan style. The art of the Kanishka period

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173 Okakura, “Shigakukai,” 266. Although in an earlier interview, “Indo Ryokō-dan,” he termed the first period, “Brahmin before Buddhism,” here he omitted this period because of the absence of remaining works from this period.

174 「従来印度の歴史はギリシア、ローマ風の方より云ひ来りしが、之を別として論じたばれ此区分は実に苦心せり。之れギリシア、ローマのものは、パンジャップに止まりしものとして、順序を立てたればなり。」 Okakura, “Shigakukai,” 266.
has been seen as the Indo-Greek style, but today, it is believed widely to be in the Asokan style. After Nirvana, King Asoka promoted Buddhism rigorously and the style of his reign was inherited by arts in the first stage. It was practiced frequently especially at Parra, north of Agra.  

Thus he argues that the sites of Bodh-Gaya and Bharhut, located far east of Gandhara (modern Punjab), in the Gangetic Plain, had escaped Greek influence by virtue of their very geographic location. Okakura simultaneously reinforces the artistic independence of India by re-naming Kanishkan art (which had connotations of Greek influence due to its association with Gandhara, the region of Alexander’s conquest) as Asokan, thereby allying the material with a ruler who was more associated with the Ganges Valley, significantly east of the Punjab. Backed up by Indian scholarship, Okakura now clearly denied Greek influence on Indian art and formulated his version of Pan-Asian identity.

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175 「仏陀伽耶の玉垣、バーハットの塔、玉垣他迦腻色迦のたてしものありき。之は阿育王時代の風なり。従来は迦腻色迦の時代の美術を印度ギリシア風と見たりしが、今日の定説は阿育王の様式となすなり。仏滅後、阿育王は大に仏教を興せしが、其時の様式は第一期に通ずるなり。アグラの北、パッラには切りに之を用ふ。」Okakura, “Shigakukai,” 266.

176 By dating the sites to Asoka rather than Kanishka, he simultaneously moves the material back in date to the third century BCE from the first century CE.
In presenting these arguments, Okakura utilized literary materials as evidence of the existence of ancient Indian art before Greek contact, a method very similar to Mitra’s approach. In *The Ideals of the East* Okakura declared that the artistic prosperity of ancient India was evident in the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* and that there was no need to borrow from the Greeks:

The *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* contain frequent and essential allusions to storeyed towers, galleries of pictures, and castes of painters, not to speak of the golden statue of a heroine, and the magnificence of personal adornment. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that those centuries in which the wandering minstrels sang the ballads that were later to become the epics, were devoid of image-worship, for descriptive literature, concerning the forms of gods, means correlative attempts at plastic actualisation.\(^{177}\)

Here his move to find technical vocabulary related to the arts in ancient literary works echoes Mitra’s argument, as I have examined earlier in this chapter. Despite his awareness that this approach was criticized and dismissed by Fergusson, Okakura

\(^{177}\) Okakura, *Ideals*, 75.
likely adopted Mitra’s method because he recognized its effectiveness in understanding earlier Indian cultures.\(^{178}\)

Lastly, Okakura’s awareness of the colonial politics underlying and shaping European scholarship on Asia made him question the Euro-American understanding of Japanese culture. As Mitra had made clear, European estimation of Indian culture was sometimes based on prejudicial, and even factually untenable, grounds. Therefore, Okakura emphasized the importance of studying a culture from within, an idea Mitra championed three decades earlier. As I have examined in the previous chapter, Okakura had already recognized some aspects of discrimination inherent in studying Asian art from a European point of view before his Indian trip. After that journey, he further confirmed this viewpoint when he began to propagate the importance of studying Japanese art from a Japanese perspective:

... in general, when a foreigner understands Japanese tastes, he finds and appreciates only something similar to his own culture, comparing the two cultures. One example of this is Classicism, referring to ancient Greece, which is elegant, majestic, clear-cut outlined, and orderly, as you can see in Greek sculptures and architecture. Based on this standard, Westerners study Japanese ancient

\(^{178}\) Other than the epics I mentioned above, Okakura often referred to Indian texts, such as the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, and other philosophical and religious texts, in his *Ideals.*
architecture, sculptures, and paintings. Then, they may find something similar in Japanese art. They would praise Japanese art so highly only because they find elegant, majestic, and orderly elements in it. They would understand Japanese art only in its similarity to their tastes. It is rare for them to recognize our art as our own. They have not understood Japanese art from the Eastern or Japanese point of view.  

Here Okakura’s criticism of European comparative studies of Asian cultures echoes Mitra, who criticized the comparative methods of European scholars, especially Fergusson, and proposed to study the distinctive features of an object instead of the elements that are similar to Greek art. Both claimed that applying Greek standards to Asian studies resulted in only superficial understandings or more serious misrepresentations of Asia. Okakura keenly observed that Europeans study Asian art “in order to search the origins of their own civilizations, and few of them could recognize and study the characteristics of

179 「大体から見て外国人が日本の趣味を解ると云ふのは、自分達の方に存する趣味に引較べて、夫に似通ふも、類似したもの在我趣味中から見附出し、そして之を賞玩するのです。近い例が彼等には希臘以来の古典趣味と云ふものがある。是は御承知の通り典雅で、莊重で、輪劃の正しい、規律の整然たる、即ち古希臘の彫刻、建築に共通なる一種の趣味を指すので、彼等は此趣味を目安にして日本の古建築、古彫刻乃至絵画等を調べて見ると、存外我国の者にも同様の趣がある。即ち典雅、莊重、格律の正しい分子が甚だ醜かである処から、彼等は口を極めて我古美術を賞嘆すると云ぶ順序なのです。要するに彼等は、彼等と全く別趣の者として日本の趣味を味ふ事は甚だ稀で、単に相似の点よりして我を解するのです。東洋人、否日本人の心になって日本の趣味を解する迄には中々到って居ません。」 Okakura, “Nihon Shumi to Gaikoku-jin,” (1908; reprint, in Okakura Tenshin Zenshū), 3: 323-325.
these [Asian] regions as they are.” From this perspective, Europeans could understand Asian cultures only when they found something similar to their own culture in Asia.

Okakura also questioned the primacy of genealogical approaches to understand the history of art. Instead, he emphasized the importance of studying individual artists and regional cultures. The problem of Greek influence on Asia used to be a central issue in his lectures before his Indian trip, but now Okakura shifted the focus of his study. This approach again resonates with that of Mitra, who, by focusing on the particular elements of an object, both minimized the importance of foreign influence and tried to break out of endless disputes around the question, “Which one is the original, and which one is the borrower?” For Okakura, looking for European elements in Asian art generated only an endless search for an imaginary origin. Proving Greek-ness or non-Greek-ness was no longer the central issue for Asian art. Instead, he proposed to study a local culture in relation to local people

\[180\] Okakura, “Nihon Shumi,” 325.

\[181\] Okakura, “Nihon Shumi,” 323-325.

\[182\] Mitra, Antiquities, 22.
and their lives. This became his central issue in his later life: establishing an Asian point of view.

Thus, by applying to his own arguments Mitra’s nationalist agendas against British cultural politics, Okakura firmly built his idea of Asian unity.
CHAPTER 4

VISUALIZING THE IMPACT OF INDIA:
THE PAINTINGS OF THE BIJUTSUIN (1903–1909)

The new insights Okakura gained from his reflections on Mitra’s works and his acquaintance with contemporary Indian nationalist leaders perhaps had the most immediate visible impact on the collective of Japanese artists at the Nihon Bijutsuin (日本美術院 The Japan Art Institute, Tokyo). Okakura founded this private institute in 1898 to promote research about Japanese art and also to stimulate greater awareness and knowledge of the role of the arts in creating a Japanese national culture.\(^\text{183}\) The primary purpose of the Bijutsuin was, according to its statutes, to determine and preserve the distinguishing features of Japanese art in order to cultivate these elements to establish an

identifiable national style.\textsuperscript{184} Different from the more conservative art critics, such as Nakamura Fusetsu (1866-1943), Okakura did not hesitate to turn to European art in his quest for a new Japanese style.\textsuperscript{185} Painters at the Bijutsuin studied the medium of oil painting and experimented with techniques such as shading to create volume and one-point perspective.\textsuperscript{186}

After his Indian trip, Okakura restated the Bijutsuin objectives in a more explicitly nationalistic tone: "... art must be national, that we shall be lost if cut away from our traditions, and, at the same time, we consider individuality to

\textsuperscript{184} “Nihon Bijutsuin Sōsetsu no Shushi,” 1898; reprint in Okakura Tenshin Zenshū, 3: 441-449.

\textsuperscript{185} In his speeches of 1899, Okakura repeatedly urged Japanese painters to adopt Western painting techniques in order to create a new style of Japanese art. See, “Kyūshū Hakubutsukan no Hitsuyō” (Fukuoka, February 7, 1899), “Fukuoka deno Shōtaikai Sekijō nite” (Fukuoka, February 7, 1899), and “Nihon Bijutsuin Fukuoka-ten nite” (Fukuoka, February, 10, 1899), reprint in Okakura Tenshin Zenshū, 3: 232, 235, 241. For more information about Nakamura Fusetsu, see for example, Nakahara Hikaru, Nakamura Fusetsu: sono Hito to Geiseki (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1973); Nagano Shinano Bijutsukan, ed., Wakaki Hi no Nakamura Fusetsu to sono Jidai (Nagano: Nagano Shinano Bijutsukan, 1993); Takatō-machi Toshokan, ed., Kindai Yōgakai no Kísai (Nagano: Takatō-machi, 1996); Ina Bunka Kaikan, ed., Nakamura Fusetsu no Subete ten, an exhibition catalogue (Nagano: Nakamura Fusetsu no Subete ten Jikkō Iinkai, 2006).

be the essence of vitality." This statement asserts in no uncertain terms his renewed conviction in building a new national culture and a modern Japan through art, perhaps one nuanced by the insights newly acquired during his Indian experience. It suggests a vision for the future based on both long-standing Asian traditions and what might have been his understanding of the Western ideal of individualism. Exploring these ideas and giving tangible expression to Okakura’s mandate, the painters at the Bijutsuin strived to create a new school of Japanese painting.

Soon after his return to Japan, Okakura dispatched his most prominent disciple, Yokoyama Taikan, to India. He wanted Taikan to explore Japan’s cultural ancestry through a first-hand

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understanding of Asia’s past, particularly the ancient art of India:

In India, there are countless and various study subjects for us in which we should not follow the European scholars’ opinions. For example, Japanese customs whose origins have been difficult to trace should be compared to similar Indian customs. Then, your questions of the origin will be answered in many such cases. I believe that Japanese scholars should visit India at least once: not only must it be extremely interesting for him personally, but also very beneficial for development of his scholarship.\(^{189}\)

In addition, Okakura certainly expected that his disciples would benefit from engaging with Indian nationalist artists whose quest for national identity through art Okakura had personally witnessed and from which he had learned.\(^{190}\)

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\(^{190}\) According to Abanindranath Tagore, Okakura told him before he left for Japan, “I would send one or two of our painters to India. They would produce their paintings by observing this country. You would be able to see their works. It would be good for them [Japanese painters] and also beneficial for you [Indian painters],” Abanindranāth Tākur (Abanindranath Tagore), “Jodāsānkor dhare,” trans. into Japanese by Usuda Masayuki, in Ajia Kindai Kaiga no Yoake-ten Jikkō Inkai, ed., Ajia Kindai Kaiga no Yoake Ten, an exhibition catalogue (Tokyo: Mainichi Shimbun, 1985), n. p.
Taikan, accompanied by fellow painter Hishida Shunsō, left for India in January, 1903, and remained for five months.\textsuperscript{191} During much of this time, they stayed with Okakura’s new friends, including the Tagores and other elite Calcutta families. Through such proximity, the two artists were able to have sustained communication with the foremost Indian nationalist artists, including Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951) and Nandalal

\textsuperscript{191} At first, the two painters expected a commission from the Kingdom of Tippera (a state in North-East India and a part of Bangladesh today) through Okakura’s connection, but it was not realized due to interference from the British government. See Taikan, Taikan Gadan, 49-53. For more information about Shunsō, see for example, Hishida Haruo, ed., \textit{Hishida Shunsō}, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Dainihon Kaiga, 1976-78); Teshigawara Jun, \textit{Hishida Shunsō to sono Jidai} (Tokyo: Rikuie Shobō, 1982); Kyoto-shi Bijutsukan et al., ed., \textit{Kindai Nihon Kaiga no Kyoshō: Hishida Shunsō ten} (Kyoto: Kyoto Shimbun, 1982); Asahi Shimbun, ed., \textit{Hishida Shunsō: Fujuku no tensai} (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbun, 1987); Iida-shi Bijutsu Hakubutsukan, ed., \textit{Hishida Shunsō: Kūkan Hyōgen no Tsuikyū} (Iida: Iidashi Bijutsu Hakubutsukan, 1989); Aichi-ken Bijutsukan et al., ed., \textit{Hishida Shunsō} (Nagoya: Hishida Shunsō-ten Jikkō Iinkai, 2003).
Bose (1882-1966). Taikan and Shunsō engaged with these intellectuals in projects such as recovering the ancient past through its material traces. For example, they undertook study trips to archaeological sites, including the Ajanta Caves and Banaras.

In these encounters, the two Japanese artists sought tangible traces of the Indian origins of Japanese culture as imagined by Okakura. The paintings they produced during and immediately after this trip to India are a visual representation of that search. Taikan’s 1903 *Sakyamuni Meeting His Father* (Figure 4.1, now lost), completed within twenty days after


193 On Taikan’s memoir and his accounts of his trip to India, see Taikan Gadan, 48-55; Taikan no Garon, 24-49. Abanindranath wrote about his memories of Tenshin, Taikan, and Shunsō in India in his “Jodāsānkor dhare,” in Ajia Kindai Kaiga no Yoake-ten, n. p.
returning to Japan, reveals how his experience of India was
shaped by Okakura’s vision. Shunsō’s 1903 Sarasvati (Figure
4.2) can likewise be interpreted as his search for the sources
of Japanese religious and artistic traditions in India.
Taikan’s Ryūtō (Floating Lanterns, 1909, Figure 4.3) equally
exhibits an assimilation of his Indian experience into a
Japanese context. In this chapter, I analyze these paintings
to examine how both Okakura’s insights and their own Indian
experience gave new direction to artistic production and
nationalist imagination in Japan.

**Iconography for a New Nation**

Taikan’s choice of a Buddhist subject, *Sakyamuni Meeting
His Father*, for his first painting after the trip, a painting
that he claimed as a memento of that Indian study trip, evinces
his newly gained understanding of the priority of Buddhism as

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194 Correspondingly, Okakura encouraged Indian nationalist artists and
arranged opportunities for them to communicate with Japanese artists.
Abanindranath observed Taikan’s style (mōrō-tai) closely and attempted a
similar technique, which he called the “wash technique.” For discussions
about their interactions, see Ajia Kindai Kaiga no Yoake Ten; Satō Shino,
“Mōrō-tai to Bengaru Runessansu: Yokoyama Taikan, Hishida Shunsō ga
Abanindranath Tagore ni ataeta Eikyō ni tsuite (1),” Geisō (University of
Tsukuba) 15 (1999): 77-106; “Yokoyama Taikan no Rasa Lila to Bengaru-ha no
Gaka ni tsuite,” Kanpō (Yokoyama Taikan Kinenkan)18: 3-14; “Mōrō-tai to
Bengaru Runessansu: Indo-jin Gaka Abanindranath Tagore ni yoru Suiboku no
the foundation stone of a Japanese national identity over all other available cultural sources. It points to the impact of Okakura’s formulation of a Pan-Asian unity grounded in Buddhism.

A comparison with Taikan’s earlier work, such as Mayoigo (A Stray Child) of 1902 (Figure 4.4), executed immediately before his trip to India, demonstrates this shift in his perception of the Japanese past and its impact on the present. At the center of Mayoigo, a child seems to be in a state of confusion, listening to the four people surrounding him. Taikan declared that this painting represented the bewildered state of Japanese religion and thought. Thus the child, a metaphor for Japan itself, has lost its way. Taikan employs compositional and iconographic strategies to subvert older conventions to visualize the bewildered state of Japanese art and thought caught between Asian traditions and newly imported Euro-American ones. The four adults are the founders of the four major religious and philosophical traditions that had shaped Japan:

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195 Taikan Gadan, 55. For discussions on this painting, see, for example, Weston, “Modernization in Japanese-style Painting,” 260-267.


197 Taikan Gadan, 44-45.
the Buddha, Confucius, Lao-tse, and Jesus Christ. The iconography relates closely to the popular iconography of Sankyō-zu (三教図 The Three Sages) with the Buddha, Confucius, and Lao-tse depicted together to demonstrate the resonances in the essence of their teachings.\textsuperscript{198} By inserting Jesus Christ in this conventional group of the sages, Taikan perhaps alluded to his perception of cultural and social disruption caused by the looming presence of Western cultures in Japan at the turn of the century.\textsuperscript{199} Christ occupies the center of the painting, and he seems to be pushing the two older sages behind him. Lao-tse, on the right, is depicted as an old man and shows his displeasure by glaring at Jesus. Confucius, in front, is depicted as a younger man and leans toward the child as if talking to him. In marked contrast, the Buddha, distinguished by a halo and other markings of enlightenment, such as the ushnisha (bulge on top of

\textsuperscript{198} Examples of Sankyō-zu can be seen in works by Josetsu (如拙, active 1394-1428), now housed at Kennin-ji Ryousoku-In temple (建仁寺両足院), Kyoto, and by Kanō Einō (狩野永納, 1631-1697), presently housed at the Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art. On these works, see Hiroshi Kanazawa, “Suiboku-ga: Josetsu, Shūbun, Sōtan,” Nihon no Bijutsu, no. 334 (March, 1994): 19-34 and plates 34 and 35; Kuniga Yumiko and Hashimoto Shinji, eds., Takada Keiho to Koizumi Ayaru: Ōmi Shōnin ga Bijutsu-shi ni hatashita aru Yakuwari (Ōtsu: Shiga Kenritsu Kindai Bijutsukan, 2005), 27 (plate 4).

\textsuperscript{199} For a discussion of the possible connections between this painting and Takayama Chogyū (高山樗牛 critic and editor, 1871-1902), see Taikan Gadan, 44-45; Yōko Fujimoto, “Taikan Mayoigo,” Kokka 1234: 50-51.
his head), elongated earlobes, and an urna (tuft of hair between his eyebrows), stands directly behind the child and looks calmly down at him. The heads of the Buddha and the child are vertically aligned, but Jesus’ right hand, in a gesture of blessing, interrupts this line. The child leans toward Jesus, and their bodies form a triangle at the center of the painting. The heads of the Buddha and Jesus are juxtaposed, their halos overlapping. While Taikan clearly privileges the relationships among the child (as a representative of Japan), the Buddha (Asian cultures), and Jesus (Western cultures), there is ambiguity in his particular choices for the articulation of these figures.

The child’s confusion can perhaps be read as Taikan’s own uncertainty and anxiety in his search for direction as a Japanese artist. Despite privileging Buddhist traditions as the most authentic dimension of Japanese cultural identity, Taikan also recognizes the powerful presence of, and his own keen
interest in, Western art. However, his picture does not offer any singular or explicit direction.

Taikan’s Sakyamuni suggests that his Indian encounter, guided by his mentor’s prior experience and insight, offered ways for him to negotiate some of the ambiguities in his earlier work. Having witnessed and participated in the complicated and contested process of articulating an Indian national identity through the search for historical material and the interpretation of such material, both Okakura and Taikan appreciated the significance of framing the nation’s past in order to build a new national identity. For Taikan, as for Okakura, the first way of grasping the Japanese past was through Buddhism. Although Taikan intended to visit Europe, the United States, and China, it is important to note he chose India as the

200 In this painting, Taikan experimented with European painting materials and techniques; for example, he used charcoal on silk. See Taikan Gadan, 44-45. Some contemporary critics rejected this painting as “not a Japanese style or a Western style,” Nihon Bijutsuin Hyakunen-shi, 2-Jō: 771-772 (first published in Yorozu Chōhō, 1902). At about this time, Taikan was also seeking financial support for himself and Shunsō to go to Europe to study Western art firsthand. In 1902, Taikan and Shunsō organized a buyer’s club for example, Shinshin-kai (真々会), to get financial support for their trip. Yokoyama and Hishida, “Shinshin-kai Shushi,” (a brochure distributed in 1902; reprinted in Taikan no Garon, 18-23).
first destination in his search for identity. Further, he selected a Buddhist subject to mark that momentous process of intellectual growth.

The Buddhist subject of Sakyamuni can be read as a visualization of Okakura’s vision, with Buddhism as the basis of Pan-Asian unity, in turn giving visible form to Rájendralála Mitra’s claim for the authenticity and antiquity of the Indic past. Although Taikan would likely have observed contemporary everyday Hindu customs in India, his selection of a Buddhist subject to commemorate that experience surely suggests that India, for Taikan as for Okakura, was first and foremost the birthplace of Buddhism. This work is therefore Taikan’s homage to Buddhism as the cornerstone of Japanese identity and its potential to bring different Asian cultures together, as Okakura had already proposed in The Ideals of the East.

In Sakyamuni Meeting His Father, Taikan carefully composed this unusual scene to signify a moment of return and reunion,

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201 In his memoir, Taikan recorded his conversation with Okakura about their plans to visit India. During the conversation, Okakura asked him, “Would you like to study the East first? Or would you study the West first?” “I would like to study the East first, then the West next,” Taikan replied. Okakura said, “Then, go to India,” Taikan Gadan, 84. Taikan intended to go to Europe from India, but he abandoned that plan and returned home due to the politically volatile relations between Russia and Japan at the time. See Taikan Gadan, 54.
which I read as a metaphor for his, and also Okakura’s, trip to India. The painting represents an important moment in the life of the Buddha when he returned home to his father’s palace at Kapilavastu after rejecting his princely status to explore the path of ascetic practice. At this reunion, the King was first embarrassed by his son’s mendicant practice despite his noble birth. However, Sakyamuni eventually succeeded in converting his people. The painting most likely depicts the moment when the King comes to welcome his son, but the fixed expression on his face suggests shock at finding his son begging. Taikan, however, anticipates the impending reconciliation between father and son, placing the Buddha’s newly converted devotees with hands joined in prayer on the left. On the right, behind the King, are nobles on elephants; they are not yet converted to the Buddha’s teachings. In the middle of these two seemingly oppositional groups, between the Buddha and the King, two female figures offer the Buddha flowers on a tray. Their sumptuous attire, elite status, and religious gestures offer the hope that the King and royal family will eventually accept the Buddha’s beliefs and that father and son will reconcile.\textsuperscript{202} The flower

\textsuperscript{202} The shift of tones, from light colors on the right side to solid colors
petals scattered around the Buddha’s feet blow toward the King as if to suggest the faith will spread in that direction. Through these choices, Taikan suggests the permeation of Buddhism from left to right, eastward from India to Japan.

The anticipation of acceptance and reconciliation in this painting could allude to both Okakura and Taikan’s ambivalent social positions in Japan at this time. Like the Buddha returning home with new insight, Okakura and Taikan came home with a new understanding of the origins of Japanese culture and the need for a national identity. Before Okakura and Taikan visited India, both experienced significant difficulty in consolidating their authority as nationalist intellectuals. Okakura had lost his official government position and prestige at the Tokyo Fine Arts School and the Imperial Museum due to anonymous slander about his personal conduct. It is in this context that Okakura established the Bijutsuin to develop a national artistic style in a private capacity. Likewise, on the left, also seems to reiterate these apparently opposing positions. It is impossible to determine the actual colors used in this painting based on a black and white photograph, but according to a contemporary art critic, Sakyamuni’s robe was orange, the King’s robe was green, and the painting was dominated by yellowish colors. See Nihon Bijutsuin Hyakunen-shi, 2-Jō: 815-816 (first published in Nihon Bijutsu, 1903).

203 Seventeen professors and associate professors at the school, including Taikan and Shunsō, resigned and joined Okakura and the Bijutsuin to protest the government’s decision.
Taikan’s stylistic experiments toward a new national artistic identity, called mōrō-tai (朦朧体 fuzzy style), applying color or ink on a wet surface and then obscuring it with a clean brush, had not been received favorably in Japan (Figure 4.5). His departure from, and perhaps challenge to, the traditional value placed on the quality of line and the beauty of the brushstroke was criticized severely, and his paintings found few buyers. It was in this situation that Okakura and Taikan returned from India and Taikan painted Sakyamuni. In this context, the work is perhaps a manifesto of Taikan’s determination to pursue a new national art, even if his earlier efforts had not been well received. Like the Buddha, he returned with the conviction that

204 “Mōrō-tai” was initially named in 1900 by art critics such as Ōmura Seigai. At that time, there were no negative associations. However, subsequent critics began to ridicule this style. For discussions of mōrō-tai, see Hosono Masanobu, “Zenki Bijutsuin,” a chapter in Nihon Bijutsuin Hyakunen-shi, 2-Jō: 377-433, especially 399-419. According to Satō Shino, mōrō-tai was a word originally used to criticize poems written in a diffuse style that were difficult to understand. The word “mōrō” has connotations of “deception” and “untrustworthiness.” She also points out that mōrō-tai later became a general term for a variety of non-traditional coloring techniques without contour lines. See her “Mōrō-tai to Yobareta Kokoromi ni tsuite: Byōsha Houhou o Chūshin ni,” in Botsugo 50-nen, Yokoyama Taikan, 158-162. Although mōrō-tai has been regarded as one of Taikan’s experiments in applying Western painting techniques, scholars remain unclear about which European paintings and styles Taikan looked to as models. Itakura Masaaki points out that Taikan also studied some Chinese Sung paintings with mokkotsu (没骨, a Chinese modeling technique without contour lines) in Higashiyama Gomotsu (the artistic objects collected by Ashikaga Yoshimasa, the eighth Shogun of the Ashikaga shogunate, reign 1449-1473). See his “Yokoyama Taikan no Nakano Chūgoku,” in Botsugo 50-nen, Yokoyama Taikan, 152-157.
his message, represented by a painting revealing new insights about Japan’s past and its relationship to the Indian past, would gradually be recognized by the nation, just as Buddhism was eventually accepted in the Buddha’s home country.

Indeed, mōrō-tai received some degree of acceptance when Taikan exhibited Sakyamuni at the Bijutsuin exhibition in the fall of 1903. The painting received mostly favorable assessments from art critics. For example, one critic noted the modeling of figures in shades of color:

...this is the best way to execute if one wishes not to use brush lines in a painting. Although the figures are strangely deformed as in his previous works, I think this is a very fine piece in this exhibition.

In addition to Indian Buddhist subject, the stone columns in this painting draw attention to the architectural elements at

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205 Taikan received one of seven silver awards (second place). His award-winning painting was among 250 paintings exhibited in this show (no painting received a gold award at this juried exhibition).

206 Anonymous, Seika, a magazine, December 25, 1903 (reprint, Nihon Bijutsuin Hyakunen-shi, 2-Jō: 816). It should be noted that the head of the jury was Okakura, and all other members of the jury, including Taikan and Shunsō, were Bijutsuin painters. However, critics outside the Bijutsuin circles also favorably evaluated the painting. For example, one anonymous critic wrote in a newspaper, “...all figures in the painting are majestic. Their faces and clothes are all skillfully depicted, and it is as if looking at a real scene in ancient India. The arrangement of colors is also exquisite and faultless,” Jiji Shinpō, November 2, 1903 (reprint, Nihon Bijutsuin Hyakunen-shi, 2-Jō: 816). However, Taikan had to wait until Ryūtō in 1909 to be fully accepted by the general public.
the core of the dispute between Fergusson and Mitra over Indian artistic origins. Echoing Mitra’s claim and Okakura’s support for it, Taikan chose elements of stone buildings as the background for the Buddha’s life events. Taikan was deeply aware of contemporary discussions about locating subject matter in a historical context, and the pillars in Sakyamuni may reflect that concern. In the absence of any extant architectural remains from the Buddha’s lifetime, Taikan turned to the Ajanta caves (dated from the first century BCE to the seventh century CE), which Okakura had claimed and celebrated as precedents of Japanese art. The profiles and adornment of the depicted columns bear a striking resemblance to the façade.

As Taikan read English, he may well have had some firsthand knowledge of Fergusson’s conceptualization of ancient Indian civilizations aside from Okakura’s refutation of it. Taikan had studied English at Tokyo Eigo Gakkō (東京英語学校, Tokyo School of English) for three years before he entered the Tokyo Fine Arts School. See Taikan Gadan, 160.

During the 1880s and 1890s in Japan, the importance of history painting with accurate depictions of objects and appropriate interpretations of historical events was much debated. For a discussion of history painting, see Yamanashi Toshio, Egakareta Rekishi: Nihon Kindai to “Rekishi-ga” no Jiba (Tokyo: Brücke, 2005), particularly the discussion of Taikan’s Kutsugen, see 282-291. Taikan, along with other Bijutsuin painters, responded to this demand and produced many history paintings during this period. For example, when he exhibited Kutsugen (屈原, or Qu Yuan, c. 340 BCE-c. 278 BCE, a Chinese poet and politician) in 1898 at the first Bijutsuin exhibition, Taikan received some praise for his dramatic depiction of Kutsugen’s mortification revealed by the figure’s facial expression, but at the same time, the painting was severely criticized for its inappropriate historical interpretation of this spiritually enlightened man. Some scholars read Taikan’s Kutsugen as a metaphor for Okakura. See Ueda Sayoko, “A Consideration of Yokoyama Taikan’s Qu Yuan,” Studies in Art History (University of Tokyo) 21 (2005): 49-65.
columns of Ajanta Cave #19 (Figure 4.6). Taikan carefully depicted the fluted shafts, the lotus petal capitals, and ornament segmenting the columns.

Taikan’s Sakyamuni painting also bears a striking stylistic resemblance to the murals in the Ajanta Caves. It can be interpreted as the artist’s exploration of Okakura’s conviction that the origins of Japanese painting lay in India. The modeling of the figures to give them volume is also similar to that of the Ajanta murals (Figure 4.7) and is markedly different from Taikan’s earlier style. Moreover, the hairstyles and headdresses of the two female figures at the center relate very closely to those in Cave #17 (Figure 4.8). The main figure, the Buddha, showing the right half of his body to the viewer and asking for alms with a small bowl in his hand, is also comparable to the Buddha depicted in the same cave (Figure 4.9). A source for the ornament for the elephants at the upper right corner can also be found in Cave #17 (Figure 4.10). Furthermore, the composition, crowded with figures and buildings, closely resembles the narrative paintings in the Ajanta caves, in which the pictorial space is filled with figures and buildings that

\[209\] Weston also points out the relationship between this painting and the Ajanta Caves, “Modernization in Japanese-style Painting,” 261-262.
tell sequential stories in a single pictorial plane (Figure 4.11). This is all strikingly different from Taikan’s previous works, where he preferred empty space.

The choice of Ajanta as a model to express the close historical relationship between Japanese and Indian painting is significant. As examined in the previous chapters, Okakura’s perception of the Ajanta murals shifted dramatically after reading Rájendralála Mitra’s work. Departing from his early understanding of the caves as an example of Indo-Greek art, Okakura subsequently came to believe that the Ajanta murals were “the few remaining specimens of a great Indian art.” With this new insight, Okakura identified the Ajanta painting as the true source of Japanese painting, without any taint of Western art. Taikan subsequently studied the Ajanta murals firsthand while in India and commemorated his experience of the ancestry of Japanese painting.

**Shunsō’s Goddesses**

Hishida Shunsō reflected on his Indian experience in his representation of Sarasvátí, the Indian goddess of knowledge,

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invoked in worship and upheld as mother of the nation. However, Shunsō’s vision is mediated by his mentor’s Pan-Asianism. Although Shunsō rarely expressed his politics as explicitly as Taikan, his new understanding of India as Japan’s cultural progenitor can be read in his choice of Sarasvati, who is related to Benzaiten (弁財天), a Buddhist deva in Japan achieved through Chinese interpretation. Shunsō may have recognized the Indian goddess as the original form of the more familiar Benzaiten when he encountered her imagery in India. Sarasvati’s origins can be traced as far back as the Vedic period (second millennium BCE) and the goddess underwent considerable transformation from the personification of a sacred Indian river to a Buddhist deva and guardian of music and good fortune in Japan. However, some of her visual attributes and iconography were still preserved in her Japanese form. One prevailing iconographic type of Benzaiten is a beautiful female figure

211 For a historical investigation of the transformation of Sarasvati to Benzaiten, see Catherine Ludvik, Sarasvatī, Riverine Goddess of Knowledge: From the Manuscript-carrying Viṇā-player to the Weapon-wielding Defender of the Dharma (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007). According to Ludvik, the name of Sarasvati appeared in the first Chinese translation of Sutra of Golden Light (Suvāabhāsottamā Śubhā 金光明経) in 417. According to Nedachi Kensuke, although the Sutra of Golden Light was brought to Japan as early as the 7th century, the goddess’s popularity only began in the 12th century. Nedachi, “Kichijou-, Benzai-ten zō,” Nihon no Bijutsu 317 (October, 1992): 1-84.
sitting on a rock near or in the water with a musical instrument in her hands, as in the rendition of Benzaiten (Figure 4.12) by Tosa Mitsuoki (土佐光起 1617-1691), a prominent painter of the Tosa School and a favorite of Emperor Gomizunoo (後水尾天皇 1596-1680). His bejeweled Benzaiten sits cross-legged on a rock protruding above undulated waters, tranquilly playing a biwa, or a Japanese lute. Similarly, the Sarasvati (Figure 4.13) by Ravi Varma (1848-1906), one of the early oil painters of modern India, represents the beautifully adorned deity sitting on a rock by the water and playing a sitar, or Indian string instrument.

Because prints of Varma’s Sarasvati were widely circulated, Shunsō may well have seen one. The resonances between the two goddesses would surely have reinforced Okakura’s Pan-Asianism.

A comparison between Shunsō’s Sarasvati and Mitsuoki’s Benzaiten reveals that while inheriting the traditional iconography of Benzaiten, Shunsō incorporated particular
features of the Indian Sarasvati. Shunsō’s Sarasvati sits with an Indian veena, not a Chinese pi-pa or a Japanese biwa. While Mitsuoki’s Benzaiten is dressed as a Chinese woman, Shunsō’s Sarasvati is draped in a sari and adorned with gold jewelry. Another significant departure from the traditional Japanese Benzaiten is her placement on a group of large open lotus flowers with many smaller lotuses around her.\textsuperscript{215} Shunsō seems to have looked to contemporary Indian Sarasvatis, such as the lithograph by Kristo Hurry Doss (Figure 4.14).\textsuperscript{216} Shunsō’s emphasis on the lotus indicates recognition of its importance and ubiquity as an ancient symbol of purity shared by Indian Hindu and Buddhist iconography. In choosing this element over

\textsuperscript{215} Although some Benzaitens in sculpture can be placed on a lotus flower or a lotus throne like Buddhas, the goddess rarely sits on the flower in paintings. The Myōōnten’zō, another name for Benzaiten, (the early 15\textsuperscript{th} century, housed at Ninnaji-temple 仁和寺, Kyoto) by Tosa Yukihiro, shows the goddess sitting on a large lotus flower; this image was a representation of an actual wooden statue. The Benzaiten from the 14\textsuperscript{th} century (housed at the Seikadō Bunko Art Museum 静嘉堂文庫美術館, Tokyo) shows ambiguous depictions of the rock on which the goddess sits. The rock, jutting out from the water and painted partially green, looks like it is a lotus flower. Moreover, she is sitting on a large lotus leaf laid on the rock. The lotus may have been replaced by a rock in later paintings of Benzaiten, and the association between the goddess and lotus became ambiguous, as in Mitsuoki’s work.

\textsuperscript{216} Sourindro Mohun Tagore, Six Principal Ragas with a View of Hindu Music (1877, reprint; Columbia, MO: South Asia Books, 1900). As the image was published in a book authored by a member of the Tagore family, it is possible that Shunsō had an opportunity to see it while residing with them. Partha Mitter mentions Kristo Hurry Doss as one of the artisans who practiced lithography for a popular art market in the 1870s, “Mechanical Reproduction and the World of the Colonial Artist,” Contributions to Indian Sociology 36, no. 1 (2002): 1-32.
Benzaiten’s rocky seat, he again substantiated Okakura’s Pan Asianism.217

Shunsō’s choice of Sarasvati may indicate awareness of the renewed nationalist interest in Sarasvati as the guardian of knowledge in late nineteenth-century India. As Mitra’s claim for the authenticity and antiquity of Indian culture had rekindled interest in India’s past, goddesses such as Sarasvati were embraced as its embodiment.218 Okakura and Shunsō surely apprehended Sarasvati’s potency as the goddess of knowledge, 

217 Shunsō’s fascination with this symbolic flower finds expression in another Sarasvati (Figure 4.15), also painted in 1903. This version compares even more closely to Doss’ Sarasvati in Tagore’s book. In both, the goddess sits on a lotus seat, with a dangling foot resting on a second lotus footstool. She holds her instrument in a similar manner. However, rather than the traditional Indian sari, Shunsō’s Sarasvati is draped in fabric that is continuous with the translucent, white, softly shaded lotus petals. The goddess and the flowers are integrated into one body, as if the goddess embodies the potency of the lotus. Symbolic of purity and wisdom in the Buddhist iconography shared across Asia, the lotus may have accrued further layers of meaning if it were associated with the purity of Indian art as Rájendralála Mitra had claimed.

218 The cult of Sarasvati and related goddesses later developed into the embodiment of the emergent nation; an early attempt was Abanindranath’s Bharat Mata (1904-1905). Extensive studies on Bharat Mata include Erwin Neumayer and Christine Schelberger, Bharat Mata: India’s Freedom Movement in Popular Art (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008) and Sumathi Ramaswamy, The Goddess and the Nation: Mapping Mother India (Durham [NC]: Duke University Press, 2010).
history, art and culture, around which the quest for a new national art was being centered.  

Taikan’s Ryūtō and Banaras

In the discussion of the visualization of Okakura’s ideas, Ryūtō (literally “floating lantern”) represents Taikan’s continued exploration of Indian material and work toward constructing a modern Japanese nation. Taikan specifically noted his experience of observing beautifully dressed Indian women putting small oil lamps into the Ganges in Banaras:

I have seen a scene like one I depicted in my Ryūtō in Banaras, India. … Formally dressed maidens descended the steps [ghāts] with a small dish like Japanese kawarake [earthen ware] in their hands. They washed the dishes, which contained oil and was lit, down the Ganges. If the dish did not sink while they were watching it, they would be happy because it meant that their future would be a lucky one. There may be other stories behind it, but I

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219 Nandalal Bose also painted Sarasvati later in 1941. His Sarasvati stands on a lotus, surrounded by many smaller flowers stemming from the background or the body of the goddess. See Quintanilla, ed., Rhythms of India: The Art of Nandalal Bose, 135 (Plate 18).

understood it as such from a brief explanation I could get.  

In Banaras, one of the most important pilgrimage destinations for Hindus, Taikan seems to have been especially impressed with Hindu rituals held on the many steps (ghāts) descending to the sacred river.  

Taikan’s interest in Banaras and its devotional practices as a source for innate power was shared with Calcutta’s intellectual community. They had responded to Rājendralála Mitra’s rallying cry to turn to cultural continuities from ancient times in surviving lore and practice. For example, Ernest Binfield Havell (1861-1934), principal of the Government School of Art in Calcutta and mentor to Abanindranath, visited the hallowed site and published a book about the city.  

Taikan’s description of the practice of floating lamps is

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221 Taikan Gadan, 97. This memoir, probably a verbatim record transcribed by an editor, was written when he was 84 years old, 48 years after his trip to India.

222 However, as Miriam Wattles points out, Taikan’s above description contradicts his depiction of a mother and child, not exclusively maidens, in an earlier version of the same subject, Ryūtō (1903). See Wattles, “The 1909 Ryūtō and the Aesthetics of Affectivity,” Art Journal 55, no. 3 (Autumn, 1996): 55.

223 Earnest Binfield Havell, Benares: The Sacred City, Sketches of Hindu Life and Religion (London: W. Thacker, 1905). I thank Dr. Madhuri Desai for her suggestions regarding Havell’s accounts of Banaras.
similar to Havell’s description of the Dewali festival in Banaras:

In the evening, when the short Eastern gloaming is merging into night, numbers of girls and young women, graceful as Greek nymphs in their many-coloured saris, come silently down to the ghâts bearing little earthen lamps, which they light and carefully set afloat. Then with eager faces they watch them carried away on the rippling surface of the water, still shimmering with opalescent tints from the last rays of the after-glow. For if a tiny wavelet should upset the frail craft, or if the light should flicker and go out, it bodes misfortune in the coming year. But if the light burns strong and well, till the lamp is borne far away by the current in mid-stream, happiness is in store for her who launched it on the waters.\textsuperscript{224}

It is possible that Taikan was familiar with Havell’s writing and was in touch with him during his stay in India as they moved in the same circles.

When Taikan visualized his renewed interest in Indian devotional rituals, he chose to stage his subject in the city of Banaras, believed by this time to be the oldest and holiest in India. Despite the visible presence of a Muslim population and Muslim architecture in the city and the absence of architectural antiquities, British visitors and Indian intellectuals constructed a view of the timeless sacred Hindu city of Banaras.

\textsuperscript{224} Havell, Benares, 104-105.
in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nationalist historians viewed ancient remains at Sarnath, an important Buddhist and Jain site located on the outskirts of Banaras where the Buddha gave his first sermon in the sixth century BCE, as the oldest part of Banaras and therefore as grounds for the antiquity of Banaras. By incorporating ancient Buddhist and Jain history into Hindu history and excluding Islamic history as foreign, modern Hindu nationalists claimed the timelessness of Banaras and attempted to reshape Hindu beliefs as a national history. If Taikan was familiar with such endeavors, perhaps Ryūtō could be interpreted as an attempt to refine Okakura’s preoccupation with a continuous Asian culture by visualizing


227 Desai, “Resurrecting Banaras,” 61. Havell shared this view of the city, and his narrative echoes the nationalist interest in antiquity and historical continuity initiated by Mitra some decades earlier. His account of Banaras starts with a chapter on the city in Vedic times, followed by descriptions of the city in the Hindu epics. Then he gives readers a “firmer historical ground” of the antiquity of Banaras with Buddhist and Jain historical records and remains excavated at nearby Sarnath. His narrative then incorporated the history of Buddhism and the rich religious prosperity of nearby Sarnath into the history of the development of modern Hinduism. The authenticity of ancient Indian civilization, which Mitra had defended so eloquently, now facilitated Havell’s construction of a continuous national history, in which Banaras occupied a central space for all Indian religions. Havell, Benares, especially 32.
apparently similar Buddhist and Hindu practices. The floating lamps in Banaras reminded him of the Japanese Buddhist practice of *shōryō nagashi* (精霊流し), which involves floating lanterns down a river to send off the souls of the dead who are believed to visit their family during the Bon Festival.\(^{228}\)

To reinforce this, Taikan juxtaposed Indian and Japanese pictorial elements. The facial features of the three female figures certainly signal their identity as Japanese. This surely alleviated the foreignness of the Indian subject despite the Indian attire and jewelry, particularly if compared to his earlier *Sakyamuni*.\(^{229}\) Moreover, the water pot on the step would likely have reminded Japanese Buddhist viewers of the sacred water pot that usually appears with *Kannon*, the Bodhisattva of

\(^{228}\) *Shōryō nagashi* is practiced in many regions throughout Japan to this day. The soul of the dead is believed to return to the family during the Bon or Urabon (usually around the 15\(^{th}\) of July or August). The family welcomes the soul on the first day of the Bon and sends the soul back to the world of the dead on the last day. When the family members send the soul back, they place offerings and a lantern on a small vessel down a river or the sea. *Ryūtō*’s relationship to *shōryō nagashi* is discussed by Wattles in her article “The 1909 *Ryūtō,*” endnote #30; Victoria Weston, *Japanese Painting and National Identity: Okakura Tenshin and His Circle*, 294-295.

Compassion (*Avalokitesvara*).\(^{230}\) In addition, the Bodhi tree above the women in Ryūtō would also have been familiar to Japanese as the tree under which the Buddha meditated.\(^{231}\) By incorporating established Buddhist elements in rendering a Hindu subject, Taikan emphasized elements shared by Hinduism and Buddhism and by India and Japan.

This Japanization of an Indian subject meshes with Okakura’s definition of a Japanese identity as an ability to assimilate foreign cultures without losing indigenous traditions.\(^{232}\) By the time Taikan finished this painting he had also visited America and Europe and was seeking to create a new national style that would be a compilation of various styles he studied in foreign lands. Ryūtō is an embodiment of Japanese identity as resilient, flexible, and self-assured enough to be able to assimilate foreign ideas.

\(^{230}\) In 1912, Taikan executed a similar composition, with an identical pot beside the Kannon figure. For the painting, see the exhibition catalogue, *Botsugo 50-nen, Yokoyama Taikan*, Fig. 25. Weston even suggests the three females in Ryūtō might form a classic Buddhist triad: Amida, Kannon, and Seishi, *Japanese Painting and National Identity*, 293-294.

\(^{231}\) Satō Shino argues that Taikan and Shunsō closely observed this plant in India, "Yokoyama Taikan to Hishida Shunsō no Toin-go no Sakuhin ni tsuite: Hishida Shunsō no 'Nyūbi-Kuyō' o Chūshin ni," *Geijustugaku Kenkyū* (University of Tsukuba) 3 (March, 1993):41-42.

The immediate catalyst for Taikan’s renewed interest in Indian subjects after the initial enthusiasm expressed in works such as Sakyamuni may have been the arrival of paintings by Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose in Japan in 1908. Paintings by these two Indian artists were introduced to the Japanese public in Kokka, an art periodical founded by Okakura and others in 1889. Among the works brought from India to Japan for the Kokka publication were Abanindranath’s Dewali (Fig. 4.16), 1903, and Bose’s Sati (Fig. 4.17), 1907. Both were reproduced as woodcut prints, and Taikan certainly had an opportunity to observe these works closely. Both paintings depict the devotional practices of Indian women who were

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233 From 1903 to 1909, Taikan only occasionally returned to Indian subjects, primarily Buddhist, sometimes employing Indian ornamental elements. These paintings include Kannon (1906), in which the Bodhisattva in Indian style clothing sits in a rocky landscape. See the plates in Yokoyama Taikan Kinenkan, ed., Yokoyama Taikan, 1 (Meiji): 281.

234 Nandalal Bose, Ōhi Kaikai-zu (Queen Kaikeyi), Kokka 223 (December, 1908): color plate, n.p.; Abanindranath Tagore, Tsukiyo Kangen-zu (Wind and String Music in a Moonlit Night), Kokka 226 (March, 1909): color plate, n.p. Although Okakura transferred his right to publish this periodical to Murayama Ryūhei and others due to his financial difficulties in 1905, his connection to Indian artists likely fostered the appearance of Indian contemporary art in the publication.

identified as the repositories of Indianness at that time.\textsuperscript{236}

\textit{Dewali}, the Festival of Lights, is held in October or November in India. Although Taikan’s stay in India (February to June) did not extend to \textit{Dewali} season, the lamp offering and stairs (\textit{ghāţ}) in Abanindranath’s \textit{Dewali} may have reminded Taikan of his experience in Banaras.\textsuperscript{237}

Bose’s \textit{Sati}, which depicts a faithful wife throwing herself on her husband’s flaming funeral pyre, may have equally contributed to Taikan’s idealization of women as embodiments of innate and enduring spirituality.\textsuperscript{238} Although the practice of \textit{sati} was highly controversial and was banned in the nineteenth

\textsuperscript{236} Scholars such as Partha Chatterjee have argued that Indian nationalists of this time defended the traditional virtues and roles of women not because they were mere conservatives, but because they asserted that Indian domestic life could not be colonized by Western culture, whereas social life outside the home was colonized and forced to change. Thus, Indian women, who represented Indian domestic culture and uncolonized spirituality, came to embody India’s true self and national identity. Chatterjee, “The Nation and Its Women,” in \textit{The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 119-121.

\textsuperscript{237} Taikan might have witnessed the practice of devotional offerings of clay lamps to the river Ganga. Diana L. Eck discusses the use of such practices in \textit{Banaras: City of Light} (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1983; reprint, New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1993), 212. Abanindranath’s \textit{Dewali} is dated to 1903, the year Taikan was in India. It is possible that Taikan saw the piece or sketches of it, or engaged in discussions with the artist about its visualization.

\textsuperscript{238} Quintanilla points out that the subject of \textit{Sati} might be Sati, the wife of the Hindu god, Shiva, who set herself ablaze because of her father’s hostility towards her beloved husband. Quintanilla also suggests that it could be Sita, the wife of Rama in the Ramayana, whose purity was tested by a fire trial. See Quintanilla, \textit{Rhythms of India}, 115.
century, women as exemplars of faith and devotion served as a symbolic focal point in constructing an Indian identity for Bengali nationalist artists. This painting was applauded as the glorification of Indian womanhood at the exhibition held by the Indian Society of Oriental Art in Calcutta.\textsuperscript{239} The widow’s calm but intense gesture of praying in Sati finds resonance in those of the female figures praying in Taikan’s Ryūtō.

With Ryūtō, Taikan regained his reputation as a leading painter of the nation. Although he continued to reject traditional brush strokes, preferring the fuzzy style as in the rendition of hair, his earlier mōrō-tai changed to have brighter colors and some contour lines.\textsuperscript{240} After the painting was shown at the third Bunten, an exhibition held by the government, it was purchased by the government. Taikan was now appointed a jury member for governmental and other major art exhibitions.\textsuperscript{241}

\textsuperscript{239} Quintanilla, \textit{Rhythms of India}, 115.

\textsuperscript{240} Satō Shino discusses the contradictory responses to Ryūtō. Some critics, such as Kino Toshio, regard it as mōrō-tai. Others disagree, pointing to ambiguities in the definition of mōrō-tai. See her “Mōrō-tai to Yobareta Kokoromi ni tsuite,” 160.

\textsuperscript{241} \textit{Taikan no Garon}, 304.
Through stylistic and iconographic choices, these paintings give visual form to Okakura’s Pan-Asianism. Following in Okakura’s footsteps, the two painters, in their search for a new national art, found direction in India. Like Okakura before them, Taikan and Shunsō looked to Indian sites such as Banaras and Ajanta and a new knowledge of the Indian past as it was being reconstructed by nationalist intellectuals from Rájendralála Mitra to others of the Bengali school of painters. Distinct from Okakura’s nationalist vision, however, Taikan aligned himself with the harnessing of nationalist sentiment for imperialist agendas as he gained more prominence.242

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242 While Okakura was at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and after he died in 1913, Taikan’s reputation grew considerably. He began a closer relationship with the imperial and princely families and the government, which was becoming more imperialistic. For example, in 1926, he painted for the palaces of the Crown Prince, Prince Kuninomiya, and Prince Higashi-Fushiminomiya. In 1937, he designed a poster to promote “mobilization of the national spirit (国民精神総動員),” advocated by the government to prepare for the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). In 1940, he donated the proceeds from his paintings to the army and navy. See the chronological record of Taikan edited by Satō Shino and Ikeda Hiroko in Botsugo 50-nen, Yokoyama Taikan, 190-222.
CONCLUSION

The surviving historical records, both his own writing and those of his contemporary intellectuals across multiple regions, and government documents, clearly indicate that Okakura’s Pan-Asianism developed and altered over several decades. Here I have looked into a specific historical moment in depth by locating his position within the intellectual politics and rising nationalist passions that are an integral part of the conversations he engaged in. My study thereby contributes to understanding the process in which Okakura formulated his version of Pan-Asianism in relation to Indian nationalism as well as Japanese intellectual climate at a crucial moment in Japanese history, when Japanese intellectuals and institutions were actively transforming what they perceived to be a rising modern nation into a leading nation of Asia at the beginning of the twentieth century.

At this historical juncture, Okakura’s vision of Asia with India was a significant dimension of the shaping of early
Meiji intellectual history. Many Meiji intellectuals, including Okakura, sought to locate Japan on the political and cultural map as it had been drawn up by European Enlightenment scholars and colonial aspirations. They did so at first by learning from, and then reacting to Euro-American knowledge about Asia as they had “discovered” it in various forms and across multiple emerging disciplinary practices. For some, “Western knowledge” came to embody an advanced civilization to be achieved as exemplified, for example, in the anonymous article Datsu-a ron (脱亜論 leaving Asia, joining the West). Others who claimed their intellectual pedigree from the eighteenth-century Kokugaku school (国学, native studies) criticized Chinese studies, both Buddhist and Confucius, and instead studied ancient Japanese history to escape Chinese influence. They rejected both the Western civilization and Chinese traditions and attempted to search for the “pure” Japanese culture in the “unbroken”

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243 Anonymous, “Datsu-a ron,” appendix in Maruyama Masao Wabun Shū (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 2009). First published in Jiji Shinpō, March 16, 1885. Although this article has been attributed to Fukuzawa Yukichi, it still remains controversial. For a discussion, see for example, Ida Shinya, Rekishi to Tekusuto: Saikaku kara Yukichi made (Tokyo: Kōbōsha, 2001).
genealogy of the imperial house and Shinto. Yet, many other intellectuals positioned Japan as a part of an Asian community and tried to construct and renew coalitions among Asian nations, in particular with China. The government-supported Koa-kai, for example, attempted to develop mutual understandings between Japan and China.

At a time when others were still primarily looking at China for their cultural self-definition, Okakura remained distinctive in his vision of Asia, directed even further west, toward India. The encounter with Indian nationalist intellectuals gave him an alternative to the traditional understanding of Japanese history that had relied heavily on Chinese scholarship. He found in India, specifically in the works of the pioneering scholar

244 The major Kokugaku scholars include Hirata Atsutane and Moto’ori Norinaga. The Meiji government adopted this school to establish the imperial monarchy as the foundation of the new nation. For a discussion of Hirata, see for example, see Koyasu Nobukuni, Hirata Atsutane no Sekai (Tokyo: Perikansha, 2009). For a discussion of Moto’ori, see for example, Okada Chiaki, Moto’ori Norinaga no Kenkyū (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2006).

245 For more discussions of Koa-kai, see for example, Kuroki Morifumi, “The Asianism of the Koa-kai and the Ajia Kyōkai,” in Pan-Asianism in Modern Japanese History: Colonialism, Regionalism and Borders (London: Routledge, 2007), 34-51. For many Koa-kai intellectuals, China was still their authoritative intellectual model. For example, Shigeno Yasutugu, one of the Japan’s first modern historians, endeavored to edit Japan’s national history based exclusively on Chinese traditional methods. For more discussions of Shigeno and early modern historians, see for example, Seki Yukihiro, Mikado no Kuni no Rekishi-gaku (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1994) and Meiji Ishin Shiryō Gakkai ed., Meiji Ishin to Shiryō-gaku (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2010).
Rájendralála Mitra, a role model to overcome Japan’s identity formulation as defined by the Euro-American knowledge of the day, and as presented in Chinese studies. As I have examined in chapters 2 and 3, Indian nationalist reassessment of Mitra’s claim for the originality of ancient Indian culture suited this need to escape from both traditional and Euro-American definition of Japan. Boldly and selectively imagining and articulately proclaiming both visible connections between the art styles and iconography, and also continuities in the religious practices of ancient India and modern Japan, Okakura was skillfully able to envision a new Japanese identity within this Pan-Asian unity, without relying only on Chinese authority.

Determined to give tangible shape to his imagined Asian entity originating in India and achieving its full flowering in Japan, Okakura extended his mission to create a new Japanese-style painting, Nihonga (日本画), with his disciple painters. This new style had to be differentiated from Yōga (洋画), a style of oil painting newly adopted from Europe, which becoming a major school in Japanese art, therefore, competing with
Nihonga also needed to mark its departure from pre-modern Japanese art that was modeled on Chinese art, and to find fresh inspiration for its modernization. I have located the intervention of his disciples in exploring contemporary Indian art and the scholarly debates about it, from the time of Mitra’s pioneering studies into the early twentieth century, toward creating a new Japanese national style.

In 1912, a year before his death, Okakura revisited India. He saw firsthand the advances upon the early experiments he had witnessed in 1902, with the maturity of a national art school among Bengali artists. Abanindranath Tagore, in particular, reminisced that Okakura was pleased to see Bose’s works, and that he spent much of his time in Abanindranath’s studio talking about the future of national art with the Bengali artists. Renewed at the very end of his life, at a time of personal vulnerability, such deep personal ties with his Indian

246 For more discussions of the relationship between Yōga and Nihonga, see for example, Takashina Shūji et al., ed., Yōga to Nihonga, vol. 2 of Nihon Bijutsu Zenshū (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1992).

247 Abanindranath Tagore, “Jodāsānkor dhare,” Ajia Kindai Kaiga no Yoake Ten, n. p. Abanindranath also noted that Okakura, despite his devastating health condition, was especially impressed with the Sun Temple of Orissa but Mughal paintings. It was at this temple that Okakura declared he found the true essence of India, explicitly identifying particular strands in the construction of a pure India, disaggregating it from a thousand years of Muslim, Sultanate, and Mughal presence.
contemporaries speak powerfully to the legacy of the encounter that had been initiated in earlier years of reading Cunningham, Fergusson, and Mitra.
Figure 2.1 Detail of Mural #6, Kondō, Hōryū-ji Temple
Figure 2.2 Śākyamuni Triad, Kondō, Hōryū-ji Temple
Figure 2.3 Standing Jūichimen Kannon (十一面観音立像

Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara) at the Tokyo National Museum
Figure 2.4 Standing Kumen Kannon.Bosatsu (九面観音菩薩立像)

Nine-headed Avalokiteśvara) at Hōryū-ji temple
Figure 2.5 Standing Miroku Bosatsu (弥勒菩薩立像 Maitreya) at Murou-ji temple
Figure 3.1 The stone façade of the Lomas Rishi Cave at Barabar Hills, India
Figure 4.1 Yokoyama Taikan, *Shaka Chichi ni Au (Sakyamuni Meeting His Father)*, 1903, lost.
Figure 4.2 Hishida Shunsō, Sarasvati, 1903
Figure 4.3 Yokoyama Taikan, Ryūtō (Floating Lanterns), 1909.

the Museum of Modern Art, Ibaraki, Japan
Figure 4.4 Yokoyama Taikan, Mayoigo (A Stray Child), 1902
Figure 4.5 Yokoyama Taikan, Kamigata-uta: Na no Ha, 1900
Figure 4.6 the façade columns of Ajanta Cave #19
Figure 4.7 Mural, Ajanta Cave #1
Figure 4.8 Mural, Ajanta Cave #17
Figure 4.9 The Buddha depicted in Ajanta Cave #17
Figure 4.10 The elephants depicted on in Ajanta Cave #17
Figure 4.11 Conversion of Nanda depicted on mural, Ajanta Cave #16
Figure 4.12 Tosa Mitsuoki, Benzaiten, the 17th century, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Figure 4.13 Ravi Varma, Sarasvati, 1893.
Figure 4.14 Kristo Hurry Doss, Sarasvati. Illustration in Six Principal Ragas, 1877
Figure 4.15 Hishida Shunsō, Sarasvati, 1903.
Figure 4.16 Abanindranath Tagore, *Dewali*, 1903.
Figure 4.17 Nandalal Bose, Sati, 1907.
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