

Guide to the Institute



Okura Institute for the Study of Spiritual Culture
Public Interest Incorporated Foundation

Objective in Founding the Institute

The Okura Institute for the Study of Spiritual Culture was established by Kunihiko Okura (1882–1971) on April 9, 1932 and has a history of more than 80 years.

The founder, Kunihiko Okura, was a businessman who served as the president of The Okura Yoshiten Ltd. He wanted to improve Japan and the world by adding splendid individuals to it. According to him, a splendid person was someone who was pure and possessed strength of mind, who would not succumb to selfish desires, and had an abundance of intellect.

Several methods have been accrued over the long history of humanity for developing splendid people. As their results are concentrated in fields such as philosophy, religion, and history, most research at the Institute is conducted in these fields.



Kunihiko Okura
Taken in the period he was appointed President of Toyo University (1937)

Year	Event in the Institute's History
1882	Kunihiko Okura is born in Kanzaki, Saga Prefecture.
1932	The Okura Institute for the Study of Spiritual Culture is established.
1936	It becomes a foundation.
1945	Its name is changed to "Okurayama Institute for Cultural Research."
1950	The Institute's library becomes a branch library of the National Diet Library (-1960)
1959	Its name is reverted to "Okura Institute for the Study of Spiritual Culture."
1971	Kunihiko Okura dies at the age of 89.
1981	The site is sold to Yokohama City, and the buildings are donated.
1984	Okurayama Memorial Hall is opened.
1991	The Institute's former main building is designated as a Yokohama City Designated Tangible Cultural Property.
2004	4,546 artifacts related to the construction of the Institute's former main building are designated as Yokohama City Designated Tangible Cultural Property.
2012	The Institute becomes a public interest incorporated foundation.



Column 1: The Thoughts of Kunihiko Okura Man's Purpose

While food, clothing, and shelter are but means for fulfilling the object, we often forget the object and think only of the means. Purpose is the fulfilling of God's law and doing of God's work.

Taken from My Thoughts, a collection of approximately 1,400 thoughts of Kunihiko Okura, written continuously between 1925 and 1945. Each day, the Institute's website features one of these thoughts.



Current activities

The articles of association of the Institute express its goal of contributing to the development of Japanese and world cultures through research into the spiritual cultures of both the East and the West. The overall purpose of the Institute is derived from this. In order to develop splendid people, Kunihiko Okura considered it most effective to combine and utilize the good points of both Eastern and Western civilizations. To achieve the objective of its articles of association, the Institute carries out the following activities:

Research into spiritual culture

Its specific topics of research are business concepts, cultural projects, educational activities, the integration of the cultures of East and West (focusing on regional studies related to Yokohama, which from the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate became a key conduit for Western culture flowing into Japan), the thoughts and achievements of the founder, Kunihiko Okura, and the history of the Institute. It also focuses on collecting and preserving materials related to these themes.

Activities to disseminate the research findings on spiritual culture

In order to share its research findings with society at large, the Institute holds public lectures and exhibitions of artifacts and documents, as well as editing and publishing the research bulletin, Okurayama Ronsyu. The Institute cooperates with public institutions and various groups to organize lectures, produce documents, and run library tours and local walks.

The management of the Library; supplementing and maintaining the Library's collections

The Institute's Library was opened when the Institute was established in 1932. Kunihiko Okura considered it essential for people aspiring to become splendid to hone their intellectual gifts by reading books. The Library was opened to the public so that everyone could read the books. It has a collection of around 100,000 books in fields including philosophy, religion, history, and literature. These include foreign language dictionaries and about 10,000 foreign books; in addition, books stored in the Library can be accessed via the Internet. The digital archives, which are open to the public, include visual materials donated to the Library by the Nobel Prize-winning Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore.



An exhibition of artifacts



The research bulletin
Okurayama Ronsyu



Column 2: What is the oldest book?

The oldest book in the Library collection is Platonis opera quae extant Omnia (the Complete Works of Plato), published in 1578. Kunihiko Okura purchased it during a 1926 tour of the libraries and educational and religious facilities of Europe.



Platonis opera quae extant Omnia

About the Institute's Former Main Building

The present Okurayama Memorial Hall was constructed as the Institute's main building in 1932. Kunihiko Okura wanted to express, through the shape of this building, the human ideal of a pure mind, strong will, and abundant intellect. The architect Nagano Uheiji (1867–1937) created a structure that embodied Kunihiko Okura's concept.

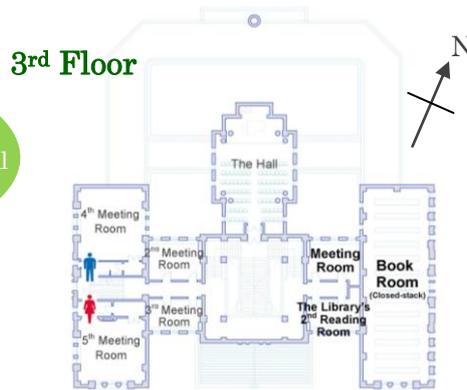
Although the Institute was based in this building, the site was sold to Yokohama City in 1981, and its buildings were donated. Currently, Yokohama City owns the Institute's former main building, and the building is managed by a designated administrator. The Institute continues to occupy the East Wing of the former main building.

The building was designated a Yokohama City Designated Tangible Cultural Property in 1991. In 2004, 4,546 related artifacts held in the Institute's collections were also designated Yokohama City Designated Tangible Cultural Property. In the design of the three-story building, the central building, chapel (presently the hall), and cloister (presently the gallery) represented "the mind"; they were enclosed by the East and West Wings, representing "intellect."

The cloister, which is presently the gallery, was a place for Zen meditation to train the mind, while the Library's collection of books was located in the East Wing, as they symbolized "intellect." Some key architectural features are introduced below.

The layout of the Institute and Okurayama Memorial Hall, highlighting special architectural features

Black text... Institute facilities
Grey text ... Memorial Hall facilities



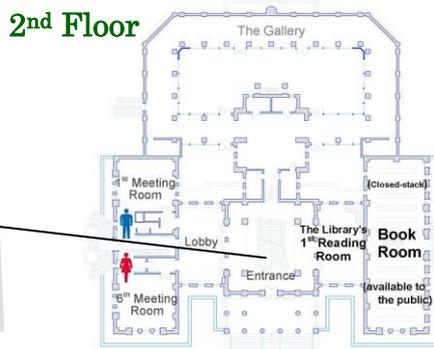
Pre-Hellenic style

This architectural style was named by Nagano Uheiji. The Buildings incorporate narrow-based pillars and other elements characteristic of the architectural styles of the Cretan and Mycenaean civilizations.



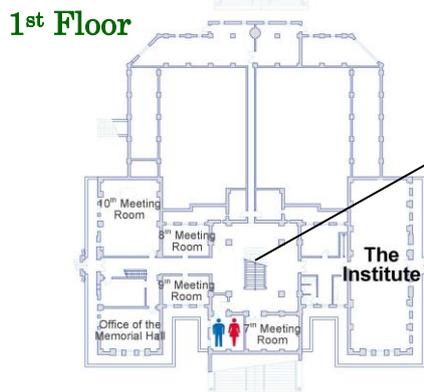
Entrance

The entrance was previously called the "room of the mind," as the golden light that pours down from above cleanses the mind. Sculptures of a lion and eagle signify that God is always watching.



An underground monument

Kunihiko Okura, during the construction of the building foundation, buried a monument under the building. (*Ryukonhi*), on which the founding idea of the Institute is carved.



Column 3: How much did it cost to build?

These buildings were equipped with the latest facilities at the time they were built. These included an electric book lift, internal heating, flush toilets, and a facility to supply hot water. The fully equipped buildings cost 459,356 yen and 18 sen to build. The total cost, including the cost of purchasing the land and constructing the attached facilities, was about 700,000 yen. Kunihiko Okura paid the full amount from his own pocket. This would be a considerable amount by today's standards.

Guide to Using the Library

Library Opening Times

The Library's first reading room: 9:30 AM–4:30 PM, Tuesday–Saturday

The second reading room: 9:30 AM–4:30 PM on days when the library is open (there are occasions when it is temporarily closed, for events, etc.)

Closed Days

Sunday, Monday / national holidays / the New Year period (as there are occasions when the Library is temporarily closed, please check the calendar at http://www.okuraken.or.jp/tosyokan/annai_lib/)

Lending books

- Once you have obtained a lending card for the library, you may borrow books, regardless of your home address. For making a card, please visit the library with a document that confirms your address (for example, a driver's license or insurance certificate).
- An individual may borrow up to 10 books for two weeks. It is possible to extend the borrowing period once, as long as another person has not reserved the relevant book. A loan can be extended by two weeks, calculated from the original due date. (Extensions can be requested at the Library counter, by telephone, or by email, at okuraken-tosyokan@abox3.so-net.ne.jp)

Copy service

- Copy charges: size B5–A3, black and white, 20 yen per sheet/color, 80 yen per sheet (Please be aware that the range of pages that can be copied is determined by the Copyright Act. Depending on the condition of the document, it may not be possible to make copies.)



1st Reading Room



2nd Reading Room

Okura Institute for the Study of Spiritual Culture Library

Tel: 045-834-6636 / FAX : 045-542-0051 / E-mail : okuraken-tosyokan@abox3.so-net.ne.jp

The Library's official website is http://www.okuraken.or.jp/library_en

The OPAC online catalogue is at <https://sv2.opac.jp/paop/cgi-bin/index.cgi?LibId=013v2d8>

Visual materials from the Tagore collection are online at <http://www.okuraken.or.jp/tagore/>



The Institute's mandala is on permanent display in the Library

Access

Nearest station

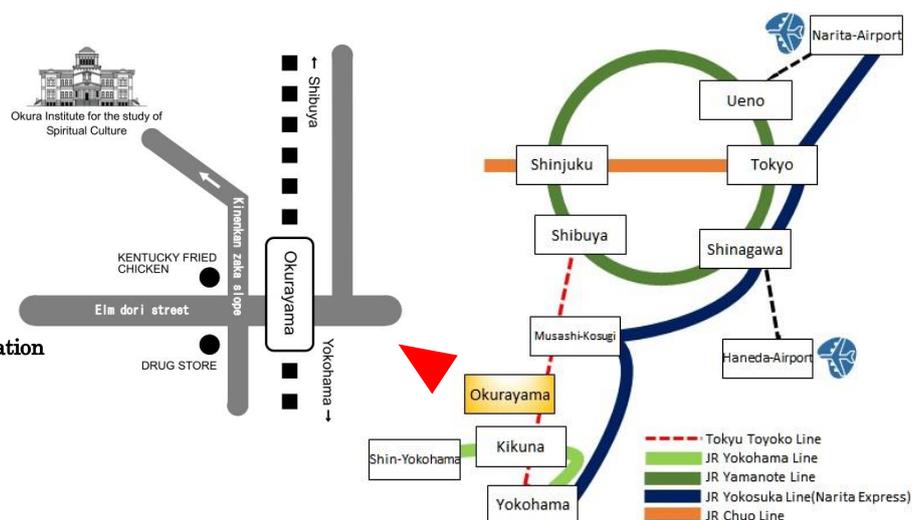
Okurayama Station (the Tokyu Toyoko Line)

From the bus stop in front of Okurayama Station (Yokohama Municipal Bus No. 41)

Seven minutes on foot

How to reach the Institute from the station

Turn right at the Okurayama Station ticket gate and climb the Kinenkan Zaka hill.



Okura Institute for the Study of Spiritual Culture Public Interest Incorporated Foundation

2-10-1, Okurayama, Kohoku Ward, Yokohama City, Kanagawa Prefecture, 222-0037

Tel: 045-542-0050 / FAX: 045-542-0051 / E-mail: okuraseishinbunka@js6.so-net.ne.jp

The Institute's official website is at http://www.okuraken.or.jp/home_en/

* Please telephone during the Library's opening hours when contacting the Institute or Library.

* Please be aware that inquiries made to the Institute or Library will be answered primarily in Japanese.