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Classics in the Libraries of Kyoto University

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Seiyokoten is by its nature an old fashioned subject and many of those who study it are old fashioned people, likely to find a card catalogue more congenial than an on-line search facility. That is an excuse. The truth is that the card catalogue is infinitely more user-friendly to people like me, with little or no ability to read Japanese. It is evident that the Kyoto University Libraries Online Public Access Catalogue, with its two modes of search (standard and expert), is a great resource for those who have enough knowledge to use it. The existence of a centralised facility, directing users to the location in different libraries of the books they seek, is to be welcomed as a major step towards rationalisation of scattered material. Kyoto University seems to have a very large number of small libraries, which are autonomous in their organisation. By contrast, the main library does not seem to contain as many books as one might expect. But the reference section on the ground floor there is excellent, and I have found it invaluable.

In the case of classics, the core material is all in the library of Bungakubu, very conveniently situated in the basement of the new

building. I know it is there, because the catalogue tells me so, but I confess that I have not always managed to find the book



I required. Classical literature is so diverse that it impinges on other departmental divisions, especially on (western) philosophy, on (western) history, and on archaeology. And books bought from the funds allocated to these other departments are not shelved with books bought from those allocated to classics. Plato, for instance, belongs in more than one place and has a corresponding range of catalogue numbers. Also, the absence of a centralised purchasing policy leads to both wasteful duplication and unfortunate omissions.

Periodicals are easier to locate, as they are arranged alphabetically; but the reader dare not linger in that part of the basement, where the space-saving expedient of compact sliding shelving induces a terror of being cut in half by a careless or impatient fellow user. Again, pur-

chasing policy seems erratic: there are some short incomplete runs (wasteful of resources). And I wonder if there is a policy on when and how (perhaps even on whether) periodicals should be bound?

Systematic, orderly and consistent classification of its holdings is one of the prime requirements for any library. In the west, two main cataloguing systems are in standard use: the Library of Congress system and the Dewey system; however, some libraries do use their own idiosyncratic methods. In the Bungakubu library, classical literature is arranged according to author: after the main bank of texts (Teubner, Budé etc.) which have the prefix 1, and a bank of collections of fragments which have the prefix 2A, the authors begin. Thus, Aeschylus is 2B Ae3 and Euripides 2B Eu2; duplicate copies are labelled. But how are books arranged under these authors? Texts with commentaries, translations, and works of criticism are mingled, and the main criterion for arrangement seems to be date of purchase. A reader interested in the Oresteia might not notice an important recent commentary on the Choephoroi; and the Euripidean commentaries are similarly not easy to locate among more ephemeral background material. And, inevitably, arrangement becomes still more haphazard where books on

subjects such as society or religion are concerned. There seem also to be delays between the purchase of a book and its appearance on the library shelves.

I am not a typical user of the libraries of Kyoto University. I have been shielded from many difficulties by exceptionally helpful colleagues, and (let it be admitted) by a certain amount of professorial privilege. And I have been able to arrange my work schedule so that I can use western libraries to supplement the local holdings. My lack of Japanese is not typical, but neither is it unique. Japanese users, and those with a good knowledge of kanji, doubtless navigate the labels on the shelves with ease. However, there must be many visitors who quietly despair of ever finding even the section they are looking for, never mind a particular book in that section; and the problems of using the online catalogue are formidable.

Still, Kyoto has one of the best - perhaps it is the very best - of classical libraries in Japan and on the whole I have been more surprised to find works present here than absent; and have welcomed the opportunity to browse on the open shelves. The problems of fragmentation which I have encountered relate more to general library arrangements than to problems in my own discipline. (クレイク、エリザベス メアリー)

古代メソポタミアの粘土板

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もし、〈書物〉を、文学作品などが印刷されている複数の紙葉が綴じあわされているものと定義してしまえば、古代メソポタミアの粘土板はどうてい〈書物〉(しょもつ)とは言えません。さしあたって、ここでは〈書物〉を〈書かれたもの〉、つまり文字、文章が記録される媒体を指すというふうに、もっともゆるやかに理解しておきましょう。じっさい、世界の歴史のなかでは、東アジア世界をのぞけば、さきほどの厳密な定義に合致するような〈書物〉(しょ

もつ)を利用できたのは、かなり新しい時代にはいつてからのことなのです。いっぽうで粘土板は、紀元前4千年紀の末から紀元後1世紀後半まで、記録媒体として用いられました。粘土板は、さまざまな書写材料のなかで、もっとも長いあいだ利用されつづけたのです。

現在までに発見されている粘土板の総数は、50万枚ちかくにのぼるでしょう。前1千年紀、新アッシリア帝国時代の浮き彫りには、セム系アラム語アルファベットを羊皮紙に書き写して