2-1-2014

Remembering Eizaburo Okuizumi

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It was about three decades ago, but I recall as if it was yesterday my first conversation with Mr. Okuizumi held at the annual dinner party of the Committee on East Asian Libraries (CEAL) of the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) in the early 1980s in Washington, D.C., a well organized and congenial affair hosted by Hideo Kaneko, then President of CEAL, and his supporting staff. Mr. Okuizumi’s sudden passing in July 2013 was especially poignant for all the members of CEAL. His significance was clear not only for the University of Chicago but also for our community of East Asian Libraries in North America. He stood for us in the best sense of the word as a lighthouse beacon amid rough seas in stormy weather. He was a role model of a pathfinder for library users who lost their way while they were searching for a particular piece of information for their immediate needs. He was always available to extend a helping hand at the Asian Studies Library at Chicago.

I also remember his big impressive smile, whenever I met him after some lapse of time. I remember his wisdom, his optimism, his diligence, his literary sense, and his workaholic enthusiasm, too. The story of Mr. Okuizumi alerts us to the enduring importance of accumulating a wide variety of knowledge, imagination, patience, as well as acquiring the ability to give quick sensible response to library users, when necessary information is requested. He embodied all the best qualities of an academic librarian with these characteristics. He was a dedicated librarian and an excellent curator, building up a fine Japanese Collection at Chicago of approximately 230,000 volumes as of 2012.

Among his many publications during his tenures at the East Asian Library of the University of Maryland (1974-83) and the East Asian Library of Chicago University (1983-2013), I would like to point out the following two titles as his most significant works.

Firstly, Senryogun kenetsu zasshi mokuroku・Kaidai: Showa 20-24 nen Censored Periodicals, 1945-49: User’s Guide to the Gordon Prange Collection¹, when he was serving

¹) Eizaburo Okuizumi, ed. 奥泉栄三郎編 Senryogun kenetsu zasshi mokuroku・Kaidai: Showa 20-24 nen
at the University of Maryland. This periodical title list of 3,500 journals with annotations of censored material from the Allied Occupation of Japan demonstrated Mr. Okuizum’s wide knowledge of Japanese periodicals published in the post-war occupation days as well as his inflexible determination to compile it successfully.

Secondly, at the University of Chicago, he edited many reproductions of old books in Japanese on Japanese immigrants residing in North America, under the title of *Shoki zai Hokubei Nihonjin no kiroku* *Publications of Early Japanese in North America.* These originals were published in Japan and the U.S. mostly in the pre-war period. This joint project with Bunsei Shoin (文生書院), a prominent Japanese reprint publisher and antiquarian bookstore located close to one of its academic clients, the University of Tokyo at its Hongo Main Campus, was regrettably left unfinished by Mr. Okuizumi’s sudden departure.

I remember fondly his Epicurean taste, as well. At the annual conferences of the AAS-CEAL, we used to dine together at local restaurants. He was not particularly looking for fashionable gourmet dishes like other ordinary Epicurians, but rather preferred having simply cooked traditional dishes with local and seasonal ingredients which were available in the host city of the AAS-CEAL Conferences such as oyster and lobster dishes at Boston, abalone and clams platters at San Francisco, and Catfish fusion plates at New Orleans, Crescent City on the Mississippi River; and so on. He was a strong drinker, too. But he behaved like a gentleman at all times. Let me say again that he was a seasoned librarian with sound judgment in all areas of operations and services concerning the voluminous collection in Japanese Studies at the University of Chicago.

Rest in peace, Mr. Okuizumi, our dear colleague! And thank you very much for your kind encouragement and friendship given to many CEAL members over your long library career from 1974 to 2013.

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