

DEPARTMENT OF INDOLOGICAL STUDIES

Indological studies begin with a close reading of the texts of various genres written in an old South Asian language called Sanskrit. Sanskrit, as a representative language of the knowledge systems of India, enjoyed a status more or less corresponding to that of Latin in Europe. Sanskritic culture was disseminated widely in South Asia, and also spread to Southeast Asia in the mediaeval period.

You may be familiar with the drama *Śākuntala* by Kālidāsa, the most famous example of classical Sanskrit belles-lettres. In the field of Indological studies, we deal not only with belles-lettres, but also with philosophical treatises as vestiges of the speculations of the ancient Indians, with the epics and heroic/romantic narratives, with the religious scriptures of Hinduism, with books of law and politics, and with medical, astronomical, astrological and other sciences and arts. We also recently started studying mediaeval cook books.

We have talked about Sanskrit, but this is not the only language important for learning about Indian civilization. The history of India we can learn from written source starts with a text called the *R̥gveda Saṃ*

hitā, which is dated to around BC 1200. This literature is composed in a language we call Vedic, which preserves an earlier form of Old Indo-Aryan than Sanskrit and is indispensable in tracing the history of the Indo-European languages. A variety of languages that belong to the Middle Indo-Aryan are also important because they are closer to the spoken languages, and therefore much of the early Buddhist and Jain literature is composed in one of these languages.

All the same, the Indians have often regarded 'language' not as a mere tool of communication, but as a powerful entity in its own right. Scholarship concerning language, such as grammar, metrics, poetry, and linguistic philosophy, has always played a vital role in their intellectual traditions. Indological studies are also, above all, for students who love languages and who wish to investigate the cultural heritage of the Indian civilization by wrestling with classical literature.

In addition, about half of the classes in our department are held in English and some others can be at participants' request. Foreign students can study in an English medium from the elementary to the advanced level.



PHOTO : Cherry-blossom party in the Royal Palace Garden