

Obituary Notice: YAMAMOTO Tatsuro

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Professor YAMAMOTO Tatsuro, the renowned pioneer of Southeast Asian history in Japan, peacefully passed away on 24 January 2001 in Tokyo at the age of 90. We all deeply regret that the publication of the first volume of a ten volumes history of Southeast Asia in Japanese was not witnessed by its most enthusiastic initiator and learned editor.

The scholastic talents of the young YAMAMOTO were clearly shown as early as 1933 when he submitted, at the age of 22, to the Department of Oriental History of the Imperial University of Tokyo his graduation thesis entitled "Teiwa no Seisei" (The Western Voyage of Cheng Ho), which soon attracted the keen attention of the well-known western orientalist such as Paul Pelliot when it was published as a series of articles in 1934 in the *Tōyō Gakuhō* 東洋學報.

The extensiveness of his later scholastic endeavors is clearly reflected in the list of his publications, which extends to the historical study of Southeast Asia (Vietnam, in particular) India, China, Central Asia, West Asia, as well as Japan. His contribution to Chinese history is especially conspicuous in the study of the social and economic history of Tun-huang based upon detailed analysis of the related source materials unearthed from that region. In India, he conducted archaeological research with his Indologist colleagues, the architectural remains of Delhi Sultanate, the results of which were published in 1967, 69 and 70. In the field of Vietnamese history, he exhaustively explored Chinese sources to clarify the impact of the Yuan and Ming invasion of Vietnam, thereby providing a missing link in the history of Vietnam during those periods. In 1952, the Japanese Academy awarded him its Imperial Award for his meritorious achievements.

However, by far the most important contribution made by Professor YAMAMOTO is to be found in the fact that he was able to establish Southeast Asian history as an independent arena of academic pursuit, which had formerly been regarded as merely constituting a humble periphery of Chinese history. In order to promote the historical study of Southeast Asia in Japan, he managed to establish a chair of Southern History, covering India and Southeast Asia, in the Department of Oriental History at the University of Tokyo in 1957. This proved to be instrumental in training young Asian historians of the two regions, not a few of whom have now become leading scholars in the field. Seeing a conspicuous increase in number of young Southeast Asianists in Japan, he established in 1967 the Japan Association of Southeast Asia History. The ten-volumes *IWANAMI Tōnan Ajia-shi kōza* 岩波東南アジア史講座 (Lectures series: History of Southeast Asia), which is planned to be completed by the spring of 2002 is eloquent evidence showing the academic achievements of Professor YAMAMOTO in the development of the historical study of this part of the world.