

In Memory of the Late Professor Mori Masao

SATO, Tsugitaka

Dr. Mori Masao, Professor Emeritus of the University of Tokyo, member of the Japan Academy, passed away on December 23rd, 1996 during a period of recovery from cancer surgery. He was aged 75. Over a number of years, he had dedicated himself to the operation and growth of the Toyo Bunko as a trustee. Since 1960 Professor Mori was in charge of promoting Central Asian and Islamic Studies as a research fellow, and particularly active in collecting of Arabic, Persian and Turkish source materials. Since 1986 he turned himself to the development of total research activities as the head of the research department of the Toyo Bunko. At the same time, Professor Mori, even in his last years, fully enjoyed conversing with the younger scholars who assembled at the Toyo Bunko. Always in the vanguard of his field, Professor Mori's insatiable scholarly curiosity combined with a friendly character fascinated his students and young scholars and stimulated their own efforts to learn more about Asian history and Islamic civilization. It is greatly regretted that he had to pass away so early.

Professor Mori was born in a Buddhist temple in Shiga Prefecture on March 30th, 1921. Later in 1957 when he lost his father, he chose to leave the temple and make his way as a scholar. After graduating from Daisan Koto Gakko (a five year high school), he entered Tokyo Imperial University, Faculty of Letters, Department of Oriental History in 1941, where he began his study of the history of the nomadic peoples of Northern Asia under Professor Wada Sei. After he entered postgraduate study at the University in 1943, he was forced to take time off during the War to teach at the Naval Academy at Etajima. He returned to school in 1945 and resumed his research activities. In 1948 he was appointed an assistant professor of Hokkaido University to lecture on North Asian history. He was transferred to the University of Tokyo, Faculty of Letters, in 1956, where he attained full professorship in 1968. Over the quarter of a century until his retirement from the university in 1981, Professor Mori devoted himself to the study of Oriental history, specializing in ancient Turkic peoples. During that time he was also deeply involved in the University's administration, serving as head of the Department of Oriental History, vice-chairman of the University's 100 year history editorial committee, and member of the University Council. Other than the University's administration, he served also as chairman of the board of directors of the Historical Society of Japan.

After leaving the University of Tokyo, Professor Mori took a faculty position at Nihon University, while serving as a member of Unesco's Japan Internal Affairs Committee, head of the Research Department at the Toyo Bunko, chairman of the

board of directors of the Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan, and chairman of the board of directors of the Toho Gakkai. In 1992 he was selected to the Japan Academy due to his prestigious academic achievements in ancient Turkic history, and contributed further to the development of scholarship in this country and the reorganization of its academic institutions until he passed away.

In the time of his assistant professorship at the University of Tokyo, Professor Mori went to Ankara and Hamburg in 1958. During his year and a half stay, he studied the Ottoman Turkish and the ancient Turkic languages, collecting source materials related to these subjects. Hamburg was a particular treat for him, because he was able to study with Dr. A von Gabain, while enjoying life in the old Hansa city. In 1966 Professor Mori was invited to Leningrad University as a research fellow, and in 1976 he went to Istanbul University for a year and a half also as a research fellow to expand and deepen his study of Turkish history. While in Ankara during March–May 1982, he contributed a great deal to the establishment of the Center of Asian Studies sponsored by Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (The Center was transferred to Cairo in 1984). In 1986 he visited Ankara again, this time to give lectures on ancient Turkic history in Turkish as well as to establish a curriculum of Japanese language and culture at Ankara University. In recognition of his valuable contribution to the development of cultural exchange between Turkey and Japan, he was awarded a prize for distinguished service to culture by the Republic of Turkey in 1973 and afterwards the gold medal of the Turkish Academy.

Professor Mori describes in his memoirs his research activities started in earnest when he was released from military service and awarded a scholarship for postgraduate study in November 1945. From that time on he vigorously set out to understand the history of the Mongol empire and such ancient Turkic peoples as the T'u-chüeh 突厥, T'ieh-le 鉄勒, Ting-ling 丁零, Kao-ch'e 高車, Hsiung-nu 匈奴 and Uighur 迴紇. The hardships he suffered in a time of food shortage are vividly and humorously described in an essay contained in the collected memoirs entitled 『戦中戦後に青春を生きて』 (*In Our Youth during and after the War*, Tokyo, 1984). In another recollection "The Beginning of my Turcology" (*Toruko Bunka Kenkyu*, 7, 1994), Professor Mori reflects upon his youth also with wit, at the time he decided to study ancient Turkic history. His main concern at that time was the three empires of Hsiung-nu, T'u-chüeh and the Mongols, where power and authority were concentrated in state leaders. Through comparative studies between these three empires, he intended to show the "development" in the history of nomadic peoples in Northern Asia, in criticism of the "stagnation" theory widely popular in both European and Japanese academic circles at the time.

Professor Mori's later scholarly activity would cover a much wider range of fields from the history of ancient Turkic peoples to the contemporary history of the Republic of Turkey. His achievements may be classified into four main fields: Mongolian history, states and societies among the ancient Turkic peoples, the long history after their Islamization during the 10th to the 12th centuries, and

theoretical and general approaches to state and society among the nomadic peoples of Northern and Central Asia.

Professor Mori began his study of the history of the Mongolian state and its society via the empirical method, focusing on the structure of the Mongol army. His first article "Introduction to the Study of the *Tamachi* 探馬赤 Tribal Corps" (*Shigaku Zasshi*, 55, 1944) argues that the *Tamachi* was an elite corps commanded by the tribal chief of the Mongols. His next two articles, "A Consideration on the *Nökür*" (*Shigaku Zasshi*, 61, 1952) and "Introduction to the Study of the *Nökör*" (*Tohogaku*, 5, 1952), impressed his Japanese colleagues about to his thoroughness and substantive approach to the relationship between master and servant in the Mongol army. As a result, these articles laid important foundation stones for the later development of Mongol studies in Japan.

His research interest in the ancient Turkic peoples is probably the most important. Here Professor Mori uncovered the state structures of the T'chüeh, T'ieh-le, Kao-ch'e, Ting-ling, Hsiung-nu and Uighur based on the ancient Turkic inscriptions and Uighur documents, independent of the Chinese materials. He first made efforts to investigate the political and social structure of the T'u-chüeh empire, publishing articles like "Introductory Consideration on the Ruler's Title of the Eastern T'u-chüeh Empire" (*Toyo Gakuho*, 37, 1954), "A Consideration on the Ruler's Title of the Eastern T'u-chüeh Empire-I, II" (*Shigaku Zasshi*, 70, 1961) and "The Sogdians in the Eastern T'u-chüeh Empire" (*Kodaijaku*, 12, 1965), all to discover the characteristics of the political and social systems under the T'u-chüeh empire. According to his observations, the empires of T'u-chüeh, the First as well as the Second, were confederations of tribes which had at their core groups of nuclear clans. He compiled a dissertation to collect this research and submitted it to the University of Tokyo. After he took the degree of Doctor of Literature in 1962, he published the first volume of his collected papers entitled 『古代トルコ民族史研究 I』 (*Historical Studies of the Ancient Turkic Peoples I*, Yamakawa Shuppansha, Tokyo, 1967). He was granted the prestigious Japan Academy Award for it in 1970, in recognition of his great contribution to the study of ancient nomadic history.

During these years Professor Mori further authored many articles on the ancient Turkic peoples. His uniqueness lies in the fact that he intended to integrate ethnological and historical studies, emphasizing the ethnological approach concerning the rite of enthronement among the T'u-chüeh and historical approach concerning the state structure of the T'u-chüeh empire. This is evidently shown in such articles as "A Note on 'the Theory of the Divine Rights of Kings' among the Nomadic Nations: The Case of the T'u-chüeh People" (*Rekishigaku Kenkyu*, 133, 1948), "On the 'Wolf-headed Deity' of the Ancient Turks" (*Minzokugaku Kenkyu*, 14, 1949) and "The State Structure of the T'u-chüeh as seen in the Orkhon Inscriptions" (*Kodaishi Koza 4*, Gakuseisha, Tokyo, 1962). 『古代トルコ民族史研究 II』 (*Historical Studies of the Ancient Turkic Peoples II*, Yamakawa Shuppansha, Tokyo, 1992), a collection of these articles, in which he attached particular importance to

the study of 'shamanism' among the nomadic peoples in comparison with that of ancient Japanese society.

Professor Mori also studied on Uighur documents to describe social life of the ancient Turkic peoples. For example, we can see his excellent results in articles like "A Uighur Contract Document on the Sale of a Vineyard" (*Toyo Gakuho*, 42, 1960) and "Uighur Documents of Sale Focusing on Sellers and Purchasers" (*Yuboku Shakaisi Tankyu*, 9, 1961). Through these studies he established a solid research method dealing with inscriptions while critically using the Chinese sources. At the same time, he discovered that Uighur documents were written under the strong influence of the Chinese documentation. We may be fairly certain that his results still retain their significance in the contemporary study of Uighur documents. The third volume of his collected papers entitled 『古代トルコ民族史研究 III』 (*Historical Studies of the Ancient Turkic Peoples III*) including above research was published in 1997 (Yamakawa Shuppansha, Tokyo), just after he passed away. However, there is no doubt that these three voluminous tomes will be looked upon for years to come as monumental work in the study of the nomadic peoples in Northern and Central Asia.

Professor Mori's third field of interest concerned to Turkish history from Islamization during the 10th century to the present day. He was convinced that ancient Turkic history could be understood with a full knowledge of contemporary Turkish people. He visited Ankara and Istanbul repeatedly and seriously studied their history from the Seljuq period through the formation of the Ottoman empire to the Republic of Turkey. Being skilled in the Turkish language, he was fully conversant with many Turkish scholars during his travels there. His publications in this field include 『ナスレッディン・ホジャ物語』 (*Nasreddin Hoca: A Turkish Folktale of Wisdom*, Japanese translation from the Turkish, Heibonsha, Tokyo, 1965), "A Turkish Thinker—Namik Kemal as a Father of Liberalism" (*Koza Toyoshiso* 7, *Isuramu no Shiso*, Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, Tokyo, 1967) and "The Ottoman Turks" (*The World History* 8, Shueisha, Tokyo, 1967). Here the subject of Nasreddin Hoca, in particular, seemed quite suitable to Professor Mori who had such a natural sense of humor. Also in his analysis of historical figures, we find refreshing satire and humor.

Professor Mori never forgot the theoretical and comparative approach to state and society among nomadic peoples, despite his devotion to individual themes in ancient Turkic history. His intent was to explain nomadic peoples in terms of historical science common to Japan and Europe after World War II. His results are contained in "A Note on Ancient Turkic Society" (*Kodaishi Koza* 6, Gakuseisha, Tokyo, 1962), "Turkish States and Chinese Empires of Sui and T'ang" (*Kodaishi Koza* 10, Gakuseisha, Tokyo, 1964) and "The Structure of the Ancient Nomadic States in Northern Asia" (*Iwanami Koza Sekairekishi* 6, Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo, 1971). Professor Mori compiled a book based on these studies entitled 『古代遊牧帝國』 (*The Ancient Nomadic Empires*, Chuo Koronsha, Tokyo, 1976), which outlines the whole history of state formation, evolution and dissolution among the ancient

nomadic peoples.

It is widely known that Professor Mori wrote in a style that made the most of his knowledge of Chinese classic literature. 『李陵』, a biography of the Chinese military commander, Li Ling (d. 72 B.C.), is a good example (Chuo Koronsha, Tokyo, 1974). He describes vividly the tragic career of Li Ling who was captured by the Hsiung-nu after he had battled bravely against them. 『草原とオアシスの人々』 (*Peoples of the Steppe and Oasis*, Sanseido, Tokyo, 1984) is another masterpiece displaying Professor Mori's talents. In this book he traces the activities of nomadic peoples from ancient times to the Timur Empire, depicting their life-styles, beliefs and rituals. He was the author of many interesting essays on both ancient Turkic and modern Turkish history, and documented his personal experiences in Europe and Turkey. In these pieces of prose we learn about both the pleasure and difficulty of one dedicated scholar in the pursuit of history, fortunately blessed with a cheerful and humorous personality.

However, it was seriousness that characterized Professor Mori's scholarly career. In the last sentence he published in *Tohogakkaiho* (December 1996), he said, "During these years, I have unfortunately been in poor health. However, my mind still wants to work, by any means possible." I personally remember Professor Mori's lectures given at the University of Tokyo from the late 1960s to the early 1970s. He wore a dark suit and read thoroughly prepared notes on the history of the ancient Turkic peoples. It was the time during which he studied vigorously and became a pioneer in the field in Japan. As he writes in the 'Preface' to *Historical Studies of the Ancient Turkic Peoples II*, he intended to do interdisciplinary work on the ancient Turkic peoples, integrating historical, Turkic-philological and ethnological approaches. Professor Mori's achievements through constant effort over many decades will remain forever together with our remembrance of a broad-minded, open-hearted personality.

In autumn 1995 when I first heard Professor Mori's illness, I recalled the last poem of Matsuo Basho (1644–94): 「旅に病んで夢は枯野をかけ廻る」 "On a journey, ailing—my dreams roam about over a withered moor" (M. Ueda, *Matsuo Bashō*, Kodansha International, 1982). It is said that Basho, when he fell ill while journeying in his last years, felt impatient about what he had left unfinished. Professor Mori's state of mind was very different from that of Basho, because impatience was not in his character, even when ill in bed. He told us pleasantly of his career reflecting upon friendly communication gained with both foreign and Japanese scholars. It is to our consolation that his words conveyed a fulfilling life of study. We bow our heads in reverence and fond remembrance, not only to the tremendous strides that have been made by Professor Mori the scholar, but also to the magnanimity and wisdom of Professor Mori the human being.

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