

Obituary

Amano Motonosuke (1901–1980)

Amano Motonosuke, the most prolific scholar of Chinese economic and social history in postwar Japan, died on August 9, 1980. The author of more than two hundred articles in such well-known journals as *Tōhō*, *Mammō*, *Mantetsu chōsa geppō*, *Tōhō gakubō*, *Tōyōshi kenkyū*, he also translated into Japanese some dozen Chinese scholarly works, including Wilhelm Wagner's *Die Chinesische Landwirtschaft* (1926). Finally, he wrote some twelve books of his own, which established him as the foremost scholar of this century in the world on Chinese agricultural history.

Born February 22, 1901, in Osaka, he attended Matsuyama High School after studying classical Chinese for two years at Osaka's famous *Kaitokudō*, a private school founded in 1724. In April 1923 he entered the Faculty of Economics at Kyoto Imperial University. He successfully passed his exams in March 1926 and on April 14th went directly to Dairen in the Kantōshū Leased Territory to enter the Research Section (*Chōsaka*) of the South Manchurian Railway Company (SMR). He returned to Kyoto in July 1948.

In those twenty-two years Amano lived, travelled, and wrote in China. As a scholar-researcher, employed by the largest research organization in Asia, if not in the world at that time, he enjoyed the fruits of a long-term association with Japan's largest colonial organization; he met and came to know China's foremost scholars such as T'ao Hsi-sheng, Fang Hsien-t'ing, and Ch'iao Ch'i-ming and many others; he conducted field research in Manchuria, North China, Kiangsu, and Hainan Island; he traveled widely throughout China; and he collected a large number of rare books and documents related to Chinese agricultural history.

From November 30, 1948, to June 1955, he was a research fellow at Kyoto University's prestigious *Jimbun kagaku kenkyūjo* (Research Institute for Humanistic Studies) where he continued his research in Chinese agriculture. In June 1955 he moved to the Faculty of Letters of Osaka Municipal University as professor of Far Eastern History. In 1964 he received the Imperial Academy Prize for *Chūgoku nōgyōshi kenkyū* (Studies of Chinese agricultural history).

Amano was to visit China as the leader of a small team of distinguished Japanese China scholars in spring 1980. An operation to remove a cancerous kidney prevented his departure, and he died from cancer on August 9, 1980. His funeral, held the next day at his home in Hirakata city, was simple like his style of life: funeral attendants offered a white chrysanthemum rather than burning traditional incense. After cremation, his remains were returned to his home, to await transfer to a site located on a hill northwest of Kyoto where a small tomb is presently being built.

Amano Motonosuke was the complete scholar. All the time and energy he could spare from family and immediate friends was channeled into his research and writing. Such a life was not without anguish. He once confided to me in a rare moment that he had too often neglected his family and imposed many hardships upon them during his

years in China. Those who visited him or corresponded with him over the years will always remember a man who gave much of himself to help others in their research endeavors.

Like so many Japanese scholars who had lived in China before the war, Amano was stung by remorse and guilt by Japan's barbarities in China. He followed events in socialist China with great sympathy and worked vigorously to promote friendship between Japan and China. To that end, he carried on a voluminous correspondence with Chinese scholar-friends, sent them materials, and assisted them in every way he could.

Amano's scholarship was prodigious and profoundly insightful. His best works elucidated the critical turning points of China's agricultural history: the spread and use of the plough during the Warring States and early Han period; the development of successful dry farming procedures to increase sown area and cropping intensity in the north during the Nan-pei Ch'ao period; the diversification of farming in the north and the extension of acreage and increased cropping of land in central and southern provinces during the Sung, Ming, and Ch'ing periods. When he died, volume 2 of his *Chūgoku shakai keizaishi* (A history of Chinese society and economy) was in press, and volume 3 is being prepared for production from his completed manuscript.

Faithful to his craft and hardworking to the very end, Amano Motonosuke's life and scholarly achievement can serve as an inspiration for what each of us ought to be able to achieve in a single life if we will only remain true to the scholar's muse. Amano Motonosuke belonged to no theoretical school. He searched for historical truth by making absolutely certain of the veracity of the facts before arranging them according to his sensitive awareness of how he believed the ordinary Chinese lived and worked by handicrafts, farming and commerce.

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