



YOSHIMATSU YAMAMOTO
1893-1947

TAIWANIA

Vol. I, pp. 7-12, May 1948.

YOSHIMATSU YAMAMOTO

(1893-1947)

It was on the twenty-eighth day of June, 1947, our beloved late professor, Dr. Yoshimatsu Yamamoto, passed away at the University Hospital, Taipei, Taiwan, in the fifty-three years of his life. The untimely death of Dr. Yamamoto cast a deep shadow over not only the Botanical Faculty of the University but also other related scientific institutions.

The death was caused by an insect bite (red tick) during his botanical trip to the island of Botel Tobago off the coast of southern Taiwan under auspice of the Oceanographical Institute of Taiwan, with which he was suffered for only a short time with a high fever.

He is survived by his widow Mrs. Shizuko Yamamoto whom he married at the town of Sabae in 1927, and one son Haruyoshi Yamamoto, 19, now studying in Japan, to all of whom our sympathy is extended.

The death of Dr. Yamamoto brought to a pre-matured close of one of the distinguished careers in the field of botanical science. He excelled not only in his specialized field of the Menispermaceous plants in Asia but he also possessed a rare talent for critical analysis of botanical data which enabled him clearly to visualize the broader and more fundamental aspects of ecological and phytogeographical points of the plant life. He was really taken from the botanical fraternity in the prime of his mental vigor, with much accumulated material yet to be completed and was no doubt destined to make many more important contributions to the study of his devoted line of the Menispermaceous plants.

Dr. Yamamoto was born in a small town called Sabae, Fukui prefecture, Japan, on December 15, 1893, son of Mr. Magoshiro Wakamori

and Mrs. Ume Wakamori. At the age of ten he became an adopted heir to the Yamamoto family.

Dr. Yamamoto's formal education was varied by study at many schools. He first entered a primary school at Sabae, his native town. In 1908 he attended the Normal School of Fukui from which he graduated in 1913. After the graduation he taught in primary school of his town for a short time. In 1915 he entered the Hiroshima Higher Normal School where he studied for the next three years busily laying the ground work for his subsequent professional life. He graduated from that school in 1919 with expectation to follow a career in biological science, and at the same time he was appointed to teach biology at the Normal School of Kagoshima, but his eagerness and thirst for further study was so firm that it was impossible to reconcile from his determined resignation from that school by the school authority. In 1920 he matriculated at the Tokyo Imperial University. His fondness of nature and his interest in the biological science led him to study zoology first, but owing to the limited number for the enrollment in that Department he was unable to enter, so he decided to enter the Botanical Faculty. He specialized in taxonomical botany under Professor N. Matsumura but shortly afterwards Dr. Matsumura was retired from the active professorship due to an age limit, so he studied in the same line of study under Professor Hayata. Dr. Hayata at that time was a special research member of the Forestry Experimental Station of the Government General of Taiwan, investigating Taiwan and other tropical plants. But as he was the professor of botany at the University, it was impossible for him to conduct such a research work at the same time, so he endowed the research work to Dr. Yamamoto while he was still a student in the University. After graduating from the Tokyo Imperial University in 1923, Dr. Yamamoto remained there as an assistant to Professor Hayata, and at the same time he energetically engaged in the botanical research of Taiwan as a special research member of that institution. He studied hard under the guidance of Professor Hayata and others, so he soon began to develop into a keen and able botanist that was to become so familiar to all who knew him in his later life.

In 1928, he was appointed as Assistant Professor to the Taihoku Imperial University in which he guided the students under Professor

Kudo, and at the same time he conducted the botanical research of the Taito Mountain. In 1933, he went to America as an over-sea research member of the Government General of Taiwan. He studied first at the University of California under Dr. E. D. Merrill on tropical plants and other related subjects. In 1934, he went to England and continued to study in the Kew Botanical Garden Herbarium, under various European botanists. Unfortunately, Dr. Yamamoto became ill so he decided to return to Taiwan before the required time was expired. In 1934, he was conferred the degree of Doctor of Science from the Tokyo Imperial University. His dissertation consists those articles published during the years between 1926 and 1928 under the title "Supplementa Iconum Plantarum Formosanarum."

At the Tokyo Imperial University at that time, Dr. Hasegawa discovered a chemical constituent from *Stephania cepharantha* which shows a curable quality to patients infected by tuberculosis, so Dr. Hasegawa decided to recommend Dr. Yamamoto to conduct research work on plants from which such a constituent might be expected to occur. After consultation of every possible bibliographical studies, his research work pointed toward the Menispermaceous plants. In connection with this research, he made a trip to Java, Sumatra and Borneo in 1939 to collect every possible species of Menispermaceous plants in those areas and he published a book called "Dutch East Indies Botanical Trip." His academic ability was further revealed by the fact that he was one of the first workers on the genus *Mitrastemon* and its geographical ditribution. He discovered several important species not only in the region of Far East but also as far as Mexico.

At the University, his teaching was frequently interrupted by his being called upon to investigate botanical problems in various regions of Aisa and the southern area. In 1940 he participated as a member of the Taihoku Imperial University's Scientific Research Party to Hainan Island. After that he continued to investigate the Hainan botanical problem under the auspice of the Japanese Naval Department and in 1943 he published a monograph entitled "Materials to the Flora of the Island of Hainan." In 1942 he was appointed as a research member of the occupied area by the Japanese Army Department and he stationed at Manila, Philippine Islands. A short time after he was appointed as

an adviser to the Bureau of Science of the Philippine Commonwealth Government.

In 1943 he returned from the Philippines and continued to teach his students as vigorous as ever. On August 1945, the armistice was declared and he remained at the University under the new regime and was promoted to a full professorship of the National Taiwan University.

During the years 1945 and 1946, Dr. Yamamoto was engaged in the completion of his study on the Menispermaceae plants of China. The result of this investigation is now being published in this same number of *Taiwania*.

The year 1947 was a momentous one in the career of Dr. Yamamoto. At the close of his teaching session he joined the party which was organized to investigate the natural resources of the island of Botel Tobago and his tragic death occurred before he had begun on his report of his work.

Dr. Yamamoto was genial, lovable, of homogeneous nature, and unfailingly loyal to his friends and his students. I often thought that his best years were devoted to university teaching; he was firmly convinced and he constantly said that good teaching and research work are inseparable, so his inspirational force as a teacher is largely originated from his field research and scholarly productions. His life draws admiration from many who know him not only by reason of his personal record of botanical researches but also because of his extraordinary ability to teach the student.

Dr. Yamamoto was rather short in height as an ordinary Japanese and until his later years, remarkably youthful in appearance; his suave and pleasant talking probably made friends for him everywhere. I have been of good friendship with him for the last 12 years in Taiwan, and found that words of personal criticism seldom passed from his mouth; I never heard him speaking harshly of any one even to his house servant.

During his active field investigation, Dr. Yamamoto suffered two great bereavements, the loss of his most beloved daughter Miss Miyako Yamamoto in 1929, and in 1943, the loss of his most devoted mother while in his service in the Philippine Bureau of Science at Manila. At that time I was quartered in the same apartment with him during my connection with the Bureau of Mines, when the sad news came from

Mrs. Yamamoto, informing that his mother died. By this stark announcement, he felt so sad that he simply bursted into crying like a child.

In his last day, as he slowly faded away in the hospital, Mrs. Yamamoto, Mr. Soma, Mr. Nishita and I were at his bedside; and when I knelt down beside him, he looked at me with a smile so I told him "Mr. Yamamoto you are doing fine, you are doing fine", but all were known that the end is near. Mr. Soma related me that his clearness of mind was maintained up to a few hours before his death. I visited him several times during his critical period at the hospital, often thought that the sickness never mastered him; and his hope of ultimate recovery lasted until the margin of his death. On the evening of June 27, he suffered considerably from pain, yet when Mrs. Yamamoto told him to go to sleep, he answered "Yes" and he remained calm. That was the last voice I heard from him. Mrs. Yamamoto often related me with hearty appreciation that "My husband was so well treated and the best care had been taken to save his life by the medical staff of the hospital. Dr. Chen Li Chieh, the Director of that hospital, constantly attended personally during his critical period. So my husband was no doubt passed away with full appreciation". Early in the morning on June 28 Mr. Soma came to my house and informed me that Dr. Yamamoto died. This sad announcement hit me like a hammer and haunted me for hours the last word I heard when Mrs. Yamamoto told him that "Otosan sa mo yasumimasho" and he answered "Hai". This occurred only a few hours before his death. He passed away at 5 o'clock on June 28, 1947. He was really a good father, a devoted husband, and a real friend, and will be sorely missed by his family, his friends and his colleagues.

Hisakichi HISAZUMI *

TAIPEH, TAIWAN.

DECEMBER 18, 1947.

* 久住久吉 Professor of Geology, National Taiwan University.