

Dedication



Professor Saburo Nishimura at the last lecture at Kyoto University on 17 March 1994

Saburo Nishimura, Dr. Sci., Professor Emeritus of Kyoto University, died on 30 November 2001, at the age of 71.

Professor Nishimura was born on 29 May 1930 in Hirosaki, an inland city in Aomori Prefecture. His hometown was a gloomy place characterized by snowy weather. When he was a junior high school student, he read a translated novel, *20000 Lieues Sous Les Mers*, by Jules Verne. Professor Nishimura secretly longed to explore the tropical seas, but he spent his youth surrounded by northern marine organisms during and after World War II.

In 1949, he enrolled in Kyoto University. Through taking classes in the Department of Science, he had the opportunity to visit the Seto Marine Biological Laboratory at Shirahama, in Wakayama Prefecture. He was thrilled to have the chance to observe many diverse and showy marine organisms, something he had long dreamed of doing.

In 1953, after graduating from Kyoto University, he found a job as a member of the Fishery Laboratory of the Ministry of Fisheries at Niigata. Niigata faces the Japan Sea. Professor Nishimura spent eleven years there. He conducted intense oceanographic surveys and planktonic research on one of the laboratory's ships. He also wrote scientific papers describing whatever marine organisms he encountered. The papers that he published while in Niigata encompass the life history and ecology of various marine organisms, including economically important fish, such as *Scomber japonicus* and *Sardinops melanostictus*. His oceanographic experiences and encounters with sea life led him to hypothesize that the

Japan Sea had been a lake during active glacial time in the Quaternary Period.

In addition to his work as an oceanographic researcher, Professor Nishimura was also a scientific beachcomber. He collected many different kinds of organisms that had drifted ashore, including a great number of balloonfish (*Diodon holocanthus*). He believed that the fish had migrated from the tropical sea to the northern shore without reproducing.

The organism that he had longed to study since childhood was the rare and beautiful deep-sea trachipterid fish, *Regalecus russellii*. Fortunately, he encountered a specimen that had been collected by a trawling net. Upon dissecting it, he concluded that the fish swims nearly vertically, waving its dorsal fins but not its slender, flat body. This behavior in turn suggested that dim light penetrates deep water vertically. In 1990, a photograph of the living fish, taken by a diving photographer, confirmed his hypothesis.

In 1964, Professor Nishimura returned to the Seto Marine Biological Laboratory at Kyoto University as a research assistant. He extended his research to a variety of topics: the migration of eels, squids, sea turtles, and whales; the taxonomy and life history of isopods; and the biology of copepods. He was a naturalist with broad interests relating to diverse vertebrates and invertebrates. He wrote several field guides to marine organisms.

The marine organisms that inhabit the Kuroshio Current are very different from those Professor Nishimura was familiar with in the Japan Sea. His experience with respect to these two areas constituted the foundation from which his new ideas about the biogeography of marine organisms emerged. He submitted a doctoral thesis entitled "Various aspects of biogeography of the Japan Sea" to Kyoto University. With this dissertation he received a doctoral degree in 1970. His impressive ideas were published in a memorial book, *Formation of the Japan Sea: An Approach from Biogeography*. This book encompasses oceanography, life history, ecology, and biogeography of various marine and freshwater organisms living in and around the Japan Sea. It presents a novel but convincing view of the biogeographic history of Japan Sea.

During his stay in Shirahama, Professor Nishimura was known as an excellent editor of and contributor to the Publications of the Seto Marine Biological Laboratory. In the laboratory's library, he had the opportunity to read numerous reports of oceanographic expeditions (e.g., the Challenger Report). Moreover, he actively advised many graduate students; some of these students are contributors to this memorial volume.

His only daughter was in a traffic accident in Shirahama; this profoundly affected him. He lost his passion to study the sea and decided to accept an invitation to take up the position of Professor at the Biological Laboratory of Yoshida College, Kyoto University, in 1977. (The laboratory is now called the Graduate School of Human and Environmental Studies of Kyoto University.)

In the inland city of Kyoto, Professor Nishimura studied the biographies of naturalists as well as accounts by scientists who had endeavored to reveal the mystery of the sea. He read in English, French, Russian, Chinese and German, while listening to classical music. He also wrote biographies about the apostles of Linné and accounts of scientific expeditions, such as that of the Challenger. In a later essay, he wrote, "It was my pleasure to write on the drama of the clues picked up by the Challenger; in doing so I

recalled my youth, spent sailing on the sea. Although I have changed the direction of my research towards history, I keenly realize that the sea has always been in my heart" (Nishimura, S. 1995. My dreams and travels, *Biohistory* 2[4]: 26–30).

Of course, Professor Nishimura remained an excellent naturalist. He took undergraduate students to Seto Marine Biological Laboratory, gave lectures on the classification and ecology of marine organisms, and guided field observations of the seashore. He edited two large volumes of the *Guide to Seashore Animals of Japan with Color Pictures and Keys*, which now constitutes "the bible" for marine biologists in Japan.

In 1994, he retired from Kyoto University. His last lecture was called "My dreams and travels." He may have known that he had cancer, but he continued to write manuscripts. His book *Natural History in Civilization: The West and Japan* was published in 1999. He wrote until just before his death. His last manuscript, "Fur in the History of Mankind" was published in 2003.

We dedicate this volume to his memory, in recognition of his dreams and travels in studying natural history of the sea and the life.

Makoto KATO

List of publications by Prof. Saburo Nishimura

Original Articles

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