

Japanese Pioneers contributing to medieval English language and literature studies: Vitae, achievements and evaluation

Were it not for the work of our pioneering predecessors, Japanese scholarship of medieval English language and literature would never have developed. The same is notably true of Europe and America, where critical reflection on academic history over the past hundred years has been actively conducted in conjunction with the appraisal of current scholastic trends. A major concern of such studies is to gather and compile the achievements and contributions of pioneers, a process which had led to publications by Michael Lapidge, ed., *Interpreters of Early Medieval Britain* (British Academy, 2003), and Jane Chance, ed., *Women Medievalists and the Academy* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2005). Through their unique narratives these works reveal much about the achievements of their predecessors. For Japan we have comparable studies included in Akio Oizumi and Tadao Kubouchi, eds., *Medieval English Language Scholarship: Autobiographies by Representative Scholars in our Discipline* (Olms, 2005).

The achievements of earlier Japanese scholars of English studies (in the broadest sense) are collected in *Eigogaku Jinmei Jiten (Japanese Scholars of English Studies)*, Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1995, based on *Kenkyusha Eigogaku Jiten (Kenkyusha Dictionary of English Philology)*. However, in these works the contributions of the earliest Japanese scholars of medieval English are scarcely acknowledged. Their scholarship goes back to the 1920s, when European and American scholarship of medieval English studies was transplanted to Japan. Since then the study of medieval English has taken root in Japan, thanks to the leadership and great efforts of these pioneers, rising to its present flourishing state, so that the present cohort of contemporary scholars represents the third and fourth generations of a distinctive tradition. As part of its goal to record the history of Japanese scholarship in this field, the Japan Society for Medieval English Studies has taken on, with a sense of great honour and respect, the task of gathering, compiling and evaluating the vitae and achievements of our great pioneers.

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*We committee members would like to express our heart-felt thanks to Professor John Scahill for checking and improving the English of the authors' original papers of Japanese pioneers.