Atsushi Ajiro (Professor of Daito Bunka University)

Professor Takero Oiji was born in Hiroshima City, Hiroshima, on March 21, 1926, the eldest son of Takenosuke, an intendant-colonel (陸軍主計大佐) and Tama, a pious He entered Okayama Kenritsu Dai Ni Chugakko in 1938 and transferred to Christian. the second year of Tokyo Furitsu Dai Ni Chugakko in 1942, during which period he was forced to spend three years under medical treatment for pulmonary tuberculosis. He was admitted to the Preparatory Course for Military Accounting School (陸軍経理学校予 科) in 1944 and left the school as soon as World War II ended in 1945. After being educated at the B Course of Science (理科乙類) of Dai Ni Kotogakko at Sendai, he graduated from the Faculty of Law and Letters (Humanities) of Tohoku University in 1951 and in April of the same year he became an assistant in the Faculty of Letters there. The next year he became an assistant of Miyagi Gakuin Women's University and taught as a full-time lecturer at the Department of Humanities and Sciences of Yamagata University for four years from 1953, where he gave Old and Middle English classes. One of his colleagues at Yamagata was Kikuo Tanaka (田中菊男). In 1957 he moved to the Liberal Arts Department of Tohoku University and became an associate professor in 1962 and a professor in 1966. From 1971 he also taught students of the Faculty of Letters and of the graduate school there. Following three years of enthusiastic persuasion by Motoshi Karita (刈田元司) he accepted the professorship in the Department of English Literature of Sophia University in 1973. Moreover, he gave also many lectures (including intensive courses) focused on 'English literature and Christianity' at universities or junior colleges, such as Kumamoto, Ehime, Gifu, Shizuoka, Aoyama Gakuin, Jissen, Seishin, Seisen, Meiji, Ibaraki, Tohoku Gakuin, Shokei, Akita, Seirei, and Hirosaki. He contributed much to academic societies as a secretary of The Circle for Medieval English Language and Literature (中世英文学談話会), the chairperson for preparing the general meeting of The English Literary Society of Japan, the chairperson of The Renaissance Institute, and a working committee member of The Milton Center of In addition, he was a judging member of Japan University Accreditation Japan. Association and a full member of The Japan P.E.N. Club.

While he was a student of Tohoku University, he learned Old and Middle English language and literature under tuition of Atsuo Kobayashi (小林淳男), which led him to immerse himself in mediaeval studies. Kochi Doi (土居光知) was also a greatly influential scholar for his whole life. His academic career was closed at the age of 54 because of liver cancer but his achievements are remarkable. The subjects of his studies,

as will be seen from the list of publications, range widely over William Langland, Geoffrey Chaucer, John Gower, *Pearl* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* by the Gawain poet, Greek literature, T.S. Eliot, John Milton, G.K. Chesterton, William Morris, G.M. Hopkins, G. Greene, Kanzo Uchimura (内村鑑三), Tatsusaburo Uchimura (内村達三郎), and so on. He always told his students not to limit their study to one narrow branch and he himself supplied them an ideal model like Chaucer's parson, who *first wroghte and afterward taughte*.

His main approach in research was to get to the heart of each work and attentively explore a real image of the main character on the basis of Catholicism, of which the knowledge, he emphasized, is essential especially for understanding and interpreting mediaeval English literature. His studies based on this approach crystallized in the publication of three books: *Chaucer and his Contemporaries* (『チョーサーとその周辺』), *Fourteenth Century English Literature* (『十四世紀の英文学』), and *The Rose and the Cross: English Literature and Christianity* (『薔薇と十字架:英文学とキリスト教』). The second book, which is his representative work, examines the four greatest English poets in the fourteenth century, Chaucer, Langland, the Gawain Poet, and Gower, and discusses in the foreground how Christian ideas concerning, among other matters, 'the sacrament of penance', 'pardon or indulgence', 'satisfaction' are reflected in these works, which Japanese scholars of English literature have often hesitated to deal with from Christian points of view. Let us briefly introduce his views of these poets.

First, Prof. Oiji takes up Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales and offers an interpretation Although The Canterbury Tales presents a mixed world of what is secular and thus. what is religious, Chaucer does not end this work in tales of a mere pleasure trip but he raises the whole of the work to the level of a pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem, because he makes an ideal parson preach on 'penance' at the final tale. The sacrament of penance is very vital for salvation of the faithful and the pilgrimage for Catholics is one of devotional activities for satisfaction. Therefore the pilgrimage itself to Canterbury Cathedral is deeply related to the sacrament of penance. Secondly, he maintains that Langland's The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman is a vision of social reform from the Christian point of view and he interprets this work in the part titled 'The Pardon Scene in Piers the Plowman' as follows. Piers in Visio is not a merely literal plowman, but becomes an allegorical person symbolizing Adam, Noah, the sower, a laborer in the vineyard, a preacher, and a prophet. The latter part of *Visio* depicts how 'the sacrament of penance' and 'pardon' should be and he further remarks that "the Pardon scene, ... is certainly a sincere protest against the errors of the contemporary Church" (p.1) in his article dealing with the same theme, "Why Did Piers Rend his Pardon Asunder? — A Personal Approach to the Pardon Scene". This article, which discusses the scene which is the most difficult to explicate, was sent to George Kane. Prof. Oiji lays emphasis on the point that Langland "attacks on the abuse of the indulgences" (ibid., p.14) by "the faithless and corrupted clergy" (ibid., p.14). He considers that Piers in *Vita* transforms himself into Christ and furthermore into St. Peter and his followers.

Next, Prof. Oiji traces the lineage of Piers the Plowman finding it in the following: (1) *Wynnere and Wastoure* (c.1352), which expresses an ironically critical spirit against the Pope of Rome and the four greatest mendicant orders; (2) 'John Ball's letter from prison', in which appear the name 'Pers Plou3man' and the words 'do wel and bettre'; (3) 'Pierce the Ploughmans Crede' (c.1394), which denounces the religious and moral corruption of the four greatest mendicant orders; (4) 'Chaucer's Plowman', who has a similarity to the literal, not allegorical, aspect of the plowman whom Langland depicted in the Vita; (5) 'The Plowmans Tale, or The Complaint of the Ploughman' (author and date unknown), in which the plowman is depicted as the unified image of the one in The Canterbury Tales and the other in *Pierce the Ploughmans Crede*. One more significant contribution to Langland studies is the reference to Ikuzo Iijima (飯島郁三), whose Langland and Chaucer, A Study of the Two Types of Genius in English Poetry (Boston: The Four Seas Company, 1925) is considered to be the first study of Langland in Japan. Prof. Oiji records Iijima's achievements and his short biography in his Fourteenth Century English *Literature.* He remarks that he had an opportunity to meet and have a talk with Iijima's family members in order to acquire accurate information on him.

Then, Prof. Oiji analyses Catholicism in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, especially exploring the formation of the character of Gawain as a Catholic knight. He highlights the importance of 'sacramentum poenitentiae' or 'the sacrament of penance' in interpreting this romance. This theme is reconsidered under the title 'The Germanic King in *Beowulf* and the Catholic Knight in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*' in *The Rose and the Cross*. Lastly, to briefly take up his study of the fourth poet, Gower, it is stated that Gower regards the conflicts caused by divisions between Catholic churches as seriously problematic and that the author aims at their reunification. This consideration is made under the title 'Mourning and Prayer – Gower in the Prologue of the *Confessio Amantis*'.

In addition to the above three books, our attention must be also directed to two other publications on Langland. One is the edition of *Visio* in the B version titled *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman* in two volumes (1968-9). The first volume, which is the text based on the B-text of Skeat's Three Parallel Texts (1886), gives Prologus and Passus I to VII with Introduction consisting of six chapters. The second volume contains detailed Notes, Appendices, and Glossary. Rossell Hope Robbins reviewed this edition in *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 71 (1970), 524-5. The first volume was revised in 1973

and the second in 1978. The other is the complete translation of the *Visio* in the B version (1974), the original text of which is based on Skeat (1886), and it also contains the translation of Passus VI from the C version, which has been thought to describe Langland himself. For this translation, he received the 11th Japan Translation Culture Award in 1974.

In translating ecclesiastical terms in the Middle Age into Japanese, Prof. Oiji strongly insisted that we should follow the convention of Catholic churches, pointing out that these terms had been often replaced by those used in the context of Buddhism. For instance, 'monk', 'nun', 'friar', 'prioress', and 'pardoner' tend to be rendered as 'sō (僧)', 'nisō (尼僧)', 'takuhatsu-sō (托鉢僧)', 'nisō-inchō (尼僧院長)', 'zange-chōmon-sō (懺悔聴聞僧)' respectively. Accurate Japanese terms are 'shūdōshi (修道士)', 'shūdōjo (修道女)', 'takuhatsu-shūdōshi (托鉢修道士)', 'joshi-shūinchō (女子修院長)', and 'menshō-sekkyōka (免償説教家)'. Furthermore he criticized mistranslation caused by the lack of knowledge of Catholicism, suggesting that 'kyōku-bokushi (教区牧師)' for 'parson', 'menzai (免罪)' for 'pardon or indulgence', 'daizai (大罪)' for 'deadly sins', and 'maria-sūhai or -reihai (マリア 崇拝・礼拝)' for 'hyperdulia' should be corrected to 'shunin-shisai (主任司祭)', 'menshō (免 償)', 'zaigen (罪源)', and 'sei-maria no tokubetsu sūkei (聖マリアの特別崇敬)' respectively. He was of the opinion that it is essential to have an accurate understanding of religious terms for closely reading mediaeval religious works.

Prof. Oiji was a teacher of Greek as well as of English. He taught Greek and Greek literature to the students of the department of philosophy at Tohoku University and Sophia University. In his classes of the graduate course at Sophia and Aoyama Gakuin he taught The Canterbury Tales, Middle English verse romances, Beowulf, Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Primer and other texts, and the seminar room at Yotsuya campus was always full of many graduate students who gathered there, fascinated by his earnest teaching and profound learning and of course his good and considerate character. Sisters belonging to Ancillae Sacratissimi Cordis Iesu (聖心待女修道会) and Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres (シャルトル聖パウロ修道女会) also paid him respect because of his sincerity in teaching. He was willing to hold some reading circles for graduate students reading Old and Middle English. In these circles they read Beowulf edited by C.L. Wrenn & W.F. Bolton (1973) and *Piers Plowman*: The A Version edited by G. Kane (1960). Fortunately, I was able to spend a valuable year with Prof. Oiji reading an article in German—'Die Christlichen Elemente in *Beowulf*' by Fr. Klaeber through ninety minutes' one-on-one teaching every week, which was private tuition given just before his regular class of the graduate course.

Prof. Oiji enjoyed good companionship with such eminent scholars as Tadahiro Ikegami (池上忠弘), Isamu Saito (斉藤勇), Hisao Tsuru (都留久夫), Toshikazu Oyama (大山俊一),

Masayoshi Ito (伊藤正義), Eiichi Suzuki (鈴木栄一), Eiichi Sekimoto (関本栄一), Masatoshi Kawasaki (河崎征俊), and many others.

Prof. Oiji was christened after moving to Sophia University and his baptismal name was 'Joseph Ignatius'. His health began to deteriorate while he was taking a year's sabbatical. I called on him in hospital two months before he died on July 14 in 1980, and was able to have a talk with him for about thirty minutes, since he was relatively well. He, raising his right arm and showing it to me, said, "It has become so thin. I have received anointing of the sick. Yet after that I have come to have a strong wish to live. Whatever happens, that is the will of God. Do not worry." In his *The Rose and the Cross* (pp.23-4), he gives the following impression of Chaucer: "Chaucer, never forsaking any person and orienting them to God, takes the real world with all-encompassing love." Prof. Oiji also had such a love.

**Publications** (Reviews and short essays are not included here.)

## I Books

『チョーサーとその周辺』(*Chaucer and his Contemporaries*) (Tokyo: Bunri, 1968). ★Chapters 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12 written by Oiji, 4, 5 by Masayoshi Ito, and 8, 9 by Eiichi Suzuki.

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「ミルトン」『欧米作家と日本近代文学 5:英米篇 II』("Milton" in Authors in Europe and North America and Japanese Modern Literature 5: English and American Literature II) (Tokyo: Kyoiku-shuppan Center, 1974), 9-40.

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## **II Editions**

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## **III Translations**

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ウィリアム・ラングランド『ウィリアムの見た農夫ピァズの夢』(B テクスト)

(William Langland: *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman—The B Version*) (Tokyo: Shinozaki-shorin, 1974).

★ (第 11 回日本翻訳文化賞受賞) Received the 11th Japan Translation Culture Award.

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M.D. ノウルズ他著『キリスト教史3:中世キリスト教の成立』(M.D. Knowles et al.: *The Christian Centuries, A New History of the Catholic Church: The Middle Ages*) (Tokyo: Kodan-sha, 1981). In collaboration with Sadanori Bekku (別宮貞徳).

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「T.S. Eliot *O* "The Family Reunion"」 ("T.S. Eliot's 'The Family Reunion'") *Yamagata* University Study of English Language and Literature, No.2 (Yamagata, 1956), 1-16.

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