

Ono, Shigeru [1930-2014].

Mitsu Ide

Professor Emeritus of Tokyo Metropolitan University

Shigeru Ono was a philologist whose copious and interconnected works based on the text range widely over medieval English language and literature: the development of the English modal auxiliaries, Old English verbs of knowing and understanding, Old English verbs of possessing, Chaucer's variants, ambiguity in Malory's language, and much else. He also encouraged the study of Old and Middle English language and literature in Japan through his lectures at many universities, his books for students of Old English and a wider readership, and through the supervision of the Japanese version of a BBC TV program 'The Story of English'. He was an executive member of the English Literary Society of Japan, the English Linguistic Society of Japan, and was president of our society [=JSMES] for the academic years 1993-1994. He was nominated as an honorary member of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists at Wadham College, Oxford in 1993.

Most of the treatises and articles etc. that Ono wrote are reprinted and included in the following books.

1969 *The Development of the English Modal Auxiliaries* (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1969; 3rd ed. 1982.) [in Japanese]. (hereafter referred to as Ono 1969)

1984 *Problems in the History of English* (Tokyo: Nan'un-do, 1984) [in Japanese] (Ono 1984)

1989 *On Early English Syntax and Vocabulary* (Tokyo: Nan'un-do, 1989) (Ono 1989)

1990 *A Seminar Room of English Philology* (Tokyo: Nan'un-do, 1990) [in Japanese] (Ono 1990)

1998 *The Pleasure of Philology* (Tokyo: Nan'un-do, 1998) [in Japanese] (Ono 1998)

2000 *A Philologist – Language, History, Texts* (Tokyo: Nan'un-do, 2000) [in Japanese] (Ono 2000)

2003 *An Invitation to Philology* (Tokyo: Kaibunsha, 1003) [in Japanese] (Ono 2003)

2008 *English in History* (Tokyo: Nan'un-do, 2008) [in Japanese] (Ono 2008)

He wrote three well-documented autobiographical essays:

1981 *The Road to Philology* (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1981) [in Japanese]

2005 'A Philological Life'. *Medieval English Language Scholarship: Autobiographies by Representative Scholars in Our Discipline*. Edited by Akio Oizumi and Tadao Kubouchi. Hildesheim/Zürich/New York: Georg Olms Verlag. 129-43.

2013 'English and I'. *Gakuen* 874, Showa Women's University, 2013: 64-71. [in Japanese].

What follows has mostly been quoted or translated from these books by Ono himself, sometimes loosely and sometimes literally.

He was born in Tokyo on November 15, 1930. His father was a government official at the Ministry of Railways and was once a research student abroad and went to Europe with his mother. His mother liked language and literature.

He began to learn English in the junior course (= the first four years) of a seven-year high school, Musashi. Hideo Kano was one of the English teachers of the school and aroused in him an interest in English poetry. Later Kano was to be professor of English at Tokyo Metropolitan University and to invite Ono to be a faculty member.

He matriculated at the University of Tokyo in April 1950 and studied under Fumio Nakajima (1904-1999). Around this time Nakajima wrote "The historical study of English is the main part of English philology" (*The Methodology of English Philology* (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1941) p. 18 [in Japanese]). In his article "The Study of English in England" in *The Rising Generation* [a monthly magazine of English studies in Japanese] (Reprinted in: *A Seminar Room of English Philology*. Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1956: 113), Nakajima also quoted R. W. Chambers' words on Philology at University College: "Now, in speaking

of Philology at University College, I wish to use the word in the older, broader, and more correct sense, including the study of literature as well as the study of language. University College was the first place in England where chairs were established in the Language and Literature of England and of other modern countries; and within these walls the study of language has never been divorced from the study of literature.” (R. W. Chambers, *Man's Unconquerable Mind*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1939: 342.) To Ono, at that time a beginner who had to write a graduation thesis in the short time left to obtain a bachelor's degree, such an idea of philology was attractive but impracticable.

Ono's graduation thesis was on the auxiliary verbs in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. One of the reasons that led him to choose this theme was what he had learned from a lecture of Motoki Tokieda, professor of Japanese philology. Tokieda said that a Japanese classical scholar of the Edo period, Akira Suzuki, considered auxiliary verbs and postpositional particles to be "the voice of the mind".

After graduating from the University of Tokyo in 1953, he became an assistant in the department of English at Gakushuin University, and was promoted to a lecturer two years later. For *The Annual Report of the Faculty of Letters, Gakushuin University* (2, 1955: 157-190) he wrote his first article "The Auxiliary Verbs in *The Peterborough Chronicle*" (*The Annual Report of the Faculty of Letters, Gakushuin University* 2, 1955: 157-190) [in Japanese]. He began to take a deeper interest in the auxiliary *motan*, and wrote his second article "The Semantic Evolution of *motan*" (*The Annual Report of the Faculty of Letters, Gakushuin University* 3, 1956: 117-192) [in Japanese].

During the period when he was working for Gakushuin University, he became acquainted with Kikuo Miyabe of the University of Tokyo, and Tamotsu Matsunami of Kobe University, who was to be his colleague at Tokyo Metropolitan University. And once a week during the academic terms in 1956, he met and talked with Fumio Kuriyagawa, a professor of English at Keio University, and was in that year a guest lecturer of Gakushuin University.

In 1956 he married Kyoko Ota, an alumna of the University of Tokyo and colleague at Gakushuin University, and was later to have two daughters and four grandchildren.

In 1958 he wrote for *Anglica* his first English article: "Some Notes on the Auxiliary \**motan*" (1958; reprinted in Ono 1989, 3-17). A mention of this article is found in the second edition of Karl Brunner, *Die englische Sprache: Ihre geschichtliche Entwicklung*, Vol. 2 (Tubingen: Niemeyer, 1962: 321).

For three years from 1959 he taught at Hitotsubashi University as a lecturer in English. From about the middle of the 1950s, English studies in Japan were under the profound influence of American linguistics. Confronted with such a prevalent trend, he may for some time have wavered between the traditional and the fashionable, but he never strayed away from what he believed to be the right path, and continued the historical study of the modal auxiliaries in Old and Middle English. In 1960 he read a paper "The Early Development of the Auxiliary *ought*" at the 32nd General Meeting of the English Literary Society of Japan (published in 1960; reprinted in Ono 1989, 19-59). In the following year he wrote "A Historical Study of Modal Auxiliaries – An Introduction" (*The Annual Report of Hitotsubashi University, Arts and Sciences* 3, 1961: 119-190) [in Japanese], which was intended to be an introductory chapter of his dissertation. He reviewed various theories on modal auxiliaries and then, based on a comparison of the usage of the six English translations of the Gospel of Matthew, overviewed the development of modal auxiliaries, not by following the development of each auxiliary one by one, but by systematically considering the relation between them .

In 1962 he was invited to Tokyo Metropolitan University as an associate professor of English by Hideo Kano, who was then presiding over the department of English. For some ten years Ono was busy working for an English-Japanese dictionary edited by Fumio Nakajima (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970), but during these years his work on modal auxiliaries came near to completion and he was facing some new problems that had emerged from his previous studies. The papers he wrote in these days were: "The Infinitive with *for to* in Early Middle English" (1965; reprinted in Ono 1989, 81-90), "Chaucer's Variants and What They Tell Us – Fluctuation in the Use of Modal Auxiliaries" (1969; reprinted in Ono 1989, 91-121) and "A Statistical

Study of *shall* and *will* in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Its Relevance to Style" (1975; reprinted in Ono 1989, 123-136).

Early in 1968 he corrected and updated his papers on modal auxiliaries and published them in 1969 as *The Development of the English Modal Auxiliaries* (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1969; 3rd ed., 1982) [in Japanese]. The first chapter is an overview of English modal auxiliaries and their historical development. Chapters II through V are the detailed descriptions of the historical development of *motan* (must), *cunnan* (can), *magan* (may) and *agan* (ought) in Old English and Middle English texts. A consideration of the "for to-infinitive" is appended. In March 1969, he submitted the book to the University of Tokyo as a doctoral dissertation.

In the academic year beginning in September 1969, during the turbulence of the Vietnam War and worldwide campus riots, he studied at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia as a Fulbright visiting scholar. The classes he attended were "Comparative Indo-European Grammar" by Henry M. Hoenigswald, "Introduction to Historical and Comparative Linguistics" by Paul Thieme (visiting professor from the University of Tübingen) in the fall term and by Hoenigswald in the spring term, and "Old English" by James Rosier. Hoenigswald's idea of consistency in linguistic reconstruction is incorporated in "Reconstruction and Realism," which Ono wrote in 1970 for the Sanki Ichikawa memorial issue of *The Rising Generation* (Reprinted in Ono 1984: 13-18) [in Japanese].

In December 1969 he and his wife made a short trip to London etc. and spent a day with Bruce Mitchell and his wife at Oxford. Mitchell handed Ono an offprint of Mitchell's article "Postscript on Bede's *Mihi Cantare Habes*" (*Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 70, 1969: 369-380). Ono found in it quotations from his own paper on *ought*.

In 1971 he was awarded a DLitt from the University of Tokyo and began to teach Old and Middle English to graduate students at Tokyo Metropolitan University.

In 1972, at a meeting of the Circle for Medieval English Language and Literature, he read a paper "On Some Problems in the Study of Middle English" (published in 1974; reprinted in Ono 1984: 19-44 and 2000: 7-34). He posed the question of identity, generalization and individual speech in the historical study of language, and proposed "philological history of language", in which individual data will be chronologically accumulated regardless of consistency, as against "linguistic history of language" in which the main problem will be to make clear, if possible, general tendencies. He thought that his task was to concentrate on details.

In April 1974, he was promoted to professor at Tokyo Metropolitan University.

About that time his research into Old English vocabulary started. He read a paper "The Old English Verbs of Knowing" (published in 1975; reprinted in Ono 1989, 139-167) at the 46th General Meeting of the English Literary Society of Japan. It dealt with syntactic and semantic differences between *cunnan* and *witan*.

In 1976 he was asked by the editor of *Outline of English Linguistics*, a series of 15 volumes [in Japanese], to write volume 8 (Old English) in collaboration with Toshio Nakao, who had already published volume 9 (Middle English). The volume was published in 1980 (Tokyo: Taishukan). These, together with the two volumes dealing with later periods, form the only large-scale multi-volume history of English in Japan.

About that time, he also wrote *The Road to Philology* (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1981) [in Japanese], responding to the request of the publisher to write an introductory book in whatever style he preferred. In it he tried to retrace his path as a student of English.

Side by side with these he continued his research on Old English verbs of knowing and understanding, an offshoot from his work on *cunnan* (= to know). He was excited to find dialectal and chronological distribution of vocabulary. He read books and articles by Hans Schabram, Helmut Gneuss and Elmar Seebold among others. He thought he had come to a new field of investigation that had been a terra incognita to him till then. At the same time he recognized that mere linguistic methods could not solve such complicated problems as he was confronted with at that time.

In 1981 he wrote "The Old English Equivalents of Latin *cognoscere* and *intelligere* – The Dialectal and Temporal Distribution of Vocabulary" (1981: reprinted in Ono 1989, 169-207). This was the English version of what he wrote in Japanese for *The Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, Tokyo Metropolitan University 136, 1979: 1-49. Peter Clemons urged Ono to publish in English what he was writing in Japanese when he visited Japan in 1977. When Celia Sisam came to Japan early in 1980, she attentively listened to Ono's explanation of the already published Japanese version.

Later in the same year Angus Cameron visited Japan and attended at the 52nd General Meeting of the English Literary Society of Japan. He was present at a symposium in which Ono read "The Vocabulary of Ælfric and Wulfstan" (published in Japanese in 1981, reprinted in Ono 1984: 188-204; a slightly revised English version in 1988, and reprinted in Ono 1989, 257-273).

In 1982 he wrote a review article "Recent Studies in Old English Vocabulary" [in Japanese] for *Studies in English Literature* (Vol. 59, No. 2: 291-300). The English version is in Ono 1989, 275-291.

Other works he wrote on Old English verbs of knowing and understanding are "Supplementary Notes on *ongietan*, *undergietan* and *understandan*" (1981; reprinted in Ono 1989, 209-214), "*Understandan* as a Loan Translation, a Separable Verb and an Inseparable Verb" (1984; reprinted in Ono 1989, 215-228), and "*Undergytan* as a 'Winchester' Word" (1986; reprinted in Ono 1989: 229-241).

At the Round Table Conference on English Historical Linguistics held at Doshisha University, 3-4 December 1983, he read a paper "Style in Medieval English Prose" (published in 1985; reprinted in Ono 2000: 35-64) [in Japanese]. In this paper Old English vocabulary was taken up as a problem of style in connection with the continuity of English prose.

In January 1984, soon after the publication of a collection of his papers *Problems in the History of English* (Tokyo: Nan'un-do, 1984) (Ono 1984) [in Japanese], he underwent an operation for carcinoid and lost the lower lobe of the left lung.

Late in the same year, just before the publication of his *Old English Syntax* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), Bruce Mitchell stayed in Japan for a month and gave lectures and conducted seminars. Shortly after the publication of the monumental work in two volumes, Ono wrote a sympathetic review of it for *Studies in English Literature* (1986; Reprinted in Ono 1989, 293-301).

At the Kyoto Conference on Chaucer's English, 3-4 October 1987, Doshisha University, Kyoto, he read a paper "Chaucer's Variants and What They Tell Us" (published in 1989, reprinted in Ono 2008: 101-112 [in Japanese]; English version entitled "Chaucer's Syntactic Variants and What They Tell Us" in *Studies in English Historical Linguistics and Philology: A Festschrift for Akio Oizumi*, ed. Jacek Fisiak, Frankfurt am Main, etc., Peter Lang, 2002, 405-417).

In March 1988 he retired from Tokyo Metropolitan University, was granted the title of professor emeritus and accepted the offer of a professorship in the Graduate School at Showa Women's University.

The last article he wrote for the journal of Tokyo Metropolitan University was "Old English *agan* + Infinitive Revisited" (reprinted in Ono 1989, 61-79). Its aim was to make a survey of the use of *agan* with the infinitive, using *A Microfiche Concordance to Old English*. A few years later his help was sought by the Dictionary of Old English in connection with the entry *agan* in the fascicle *a*. It appeared in 1994.

While he was preparing for the article on *agan*, he noticed the characteristic distribution of Old English equivalents for *possidere*. As a preliminary to a more detailed work he wrote "A Note on the Old English Equivalents of Latin *possidere*" (1988; reprinted in Ono 1989, 243-253).

In April 1989 Bruce Mitchell made a short stay in Japan and delivered a passionate address "Old English Syntax: A Review of the Reviews". Ono had been encouraged by Bruce Mitchell's words in his letter to the effect that Ono's work should be known more widely on the international scene. About one month before the retirement from Tokyo Metropolitan University, he thought of making a collection of his English articles. The idea took the form of a book entitled *On Early English Syntax and Vocabulary* (Tokyo: Nan'un-do, 1989) (Ono 1989).

Shortly after its publication he became seriously ill and was confined in a hospital for a long time to go through two operations. He lost the entire left lung.

In 1990 he published *A Seminar Room of the History of English* (Ono 1990) [in Japanese], a collection of his essays and reviews related to the history of English. On the occasion of his sixtieth birthday, 15 November 1990, he was presented with a Festschrift: *Studies in English Philology in Honour of Shigeru Ono* (Tokyo: Nan'un-do, 1990).

In 1991 he read a paper "Word Preference in Old English Verbs of Possessing" at the 63rd General Meeting of the English Literary Society of Japan. He contributed it to Klaus R. Grinda and Claus-Dieter Wetzel (eds.), *Anglo-Saxonica: Beiträge zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte der englischen Sprache und zur altenglischen Literatur: Festschrift für Hans Schabram zum 65. Geburtstag* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1993, 279-288; slightly revised version in: Jacek Fisiak and Akio Oizumi (eds.), *English Historical Linguistics and Philology in Japan*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1998, 197-311).

In the summer of 1991 he and his wife went abroad after an interval of more than twenty years. They visited Edinburgh (to attend the International Conference on the Languages of Scotland), St. Andrews, London, Colchester for the Battle of Maldon Millennium Conference at the University of Essex, Cambridge, Oxford, and St. Mary's in the Scilly Isles. During that trip they met Jack Aitken, Janet Bately, Jane Roberts, Peter Clemoes, Helmut Gneuss, Donald Scragg, R. I. Page, Bruce Mitchell, and Celia Sisam.

In December 1991 he read a paper "Ambiguity in Malory's Language with Reference to Lancelot" (published in *Poetica* 37, 1993: 58-64) at the Seventh Congress of the Japan Society for Medieval English Studies. This was his first paper discussing the meaning of words in a particular literary work.

In the summers of 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1996, Ono and his wife spent four weeks at Wadham College, Oxford and met, talked with, and had lunch or dinner with many scholars.

In 1992, they visited Peter Clemoes, Bruce Mitchell, Malcolm Godden, Terry Hoad and E. G. Stanley. They also visited the reconstructed Anglo-Saxon village at West Stow, Suffolk, and the Abbey at Bury St. Edmunds at the suggestion of Janet Bately. In the autumn of that year Terry Hoad came to Japan with his family and gave lectures. Late in the same year a group of scholars led by R. I. Page came to Japan to give lectures and participate in a symposium at the Eighth Congress of the Japan Society for Medieval English Studies. At that congress Ono was elected president of the society for the academic years 1993-1994.

In April 1993 E. G. Stanley came to Japan and stayed for four weeks. In addition to giving lectures at many universities, he visited Ono at his home and gave a lecture to his colleagues and students.

In the first week of August 1993 the Sixth Conference of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists was held at Wadham College, Oxford while Ono was staying there. Among some two hundred scholars and students from twenty-one countries were more than ten Japanese, one of whom read a paper. At that congress he was nominated as an honorary member of the society. At first he hesitated but accepted, thinking that it would be an encouragement for younger Japanese Anglo-Saxonists.

At the Ninth Congress of Japan Society for Medieval English Studies in December of that year, he delivered a presidential address "Was *eadig mon* (*Beowulf* 2470b) 'Wealthy' or 'Blessed'?" (published in *Studies in Medieval English Language and Literature* 9, 1994: 1-21). While writing this article, he was influenced by William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* and, in connection with *Beowulf*, he owed much to Fred C. Robinson's stimulating book *Beowulf and the Appositive Style* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985).

Early in 1994, stimulated again by Fred C. Robinson's article "Why is Grendel's Not Greeting the *Gifstol* a *Wræc Micel*?" (Michael Korhammer (ed.), *Words, Texts and Manuscripts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Helmut Gneuss on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1992, 257-2.62), he wrote "Grendel's Not Greeting the *Gifstol* Reconsidered – with Reference to \**Motan* with the Negative" (*Poetica* 41, 1994: 11-17).

In the summer of the same year, during their stay at Wadham College, Ono and his wife made a week's trip to Munich to see Helmut Gneuss at the University of Munich. They also met Elmar Seebold, Mechthild Gretsche and Walter Hofstetter. Ono had a long talk with Seebold on Old English vocabulary. While having lunch with Hofstetter, Ono was astonished to hear Hofstetter quote, from Ono's "*Udergytan* as a 'Winchester' Word", the statement "the Winchester vocabulary was a deliberate and locally rather limited lexical choice". Hofstetter said he liked it.

In May 1995 he hit upon an emendation in *Beowulf* 70 (substitution of *ær ne* for *æfre*; published as a note "A Musing on Beowulf 70", *Medieval English Studies Newsletter* 32. The Centre for Medieval English Studies, June 1995: 3-6). Early in August the Seventh Conference of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists was held at Stanford University. There he met and talked with Fred C. Robinson for the first time.

In June 1996 he read a paper "*Fair and fæger*" at the 12th Meeting of the Eastern Division of Japan Society for Medieval English Studies. In this paper he posed the question of the meaning of a word and its implication in a particular context (*fair* in *Piers Plowman*, Prologue 17 and *fæger* in *Beowulf* 866).

In August during their stay at Wadham College, Oxford, Ono and his wife made a week's trip to Durham and York. In Durham Rosemary Cramp showed them round Durham Cathedral, the Roman site at Corbridge, Hadrian's Wall and Hexham Abbey, and Monkwearmouth and Jarrow, where they enjoyed Bede's World. They also met A. I. Doyle and he guided them round the Castle. They also visited Newcastle upon Tyne, Haworth, York and Peterborough and went back to Oxford. On 26 August they departed for Japan, and that was their fourth and last long stay in Oxford.

In September Malcolm Godden made a lecture tour in Japan and he stopped at Ono's home to have lunch with Ono and his wife.

In July 1997 he organized a session "Some Aspects of Old English Vocabulary" at the International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds. Three papers were read by his former students at Tokyo Metropolitan University. That was his last stay abroad.

In April 1998 he published a book *The Pleasure of Philology* (Ono 1998), a collection of two series of essays and studies he had written for *The Rising Generation* during 1994-1995 and 1996-1997.

In May he wrote "The Establishment of English Philology" for the centenary special issue of *The Rising Generation* (July, 1998: 98-100). He traced the formation of English studies in Japan since the arrival of John Lawrence and cast doubt on the trend towards linguistics and away from philology in the departments of English.

In November 2000 his former students gave a celebration party for his seventieth birthday. For a return gift he compiled a book of collected papers *A Philologist – Language, History, Texts* (Ono 2000). In addition to this, prompted by his wife, he made a collection of the poems he translated in his youth, *Poems Translated by Shigeru Ono – Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats* (Tokyo: Nan'un-do, 2000). His wife wrote an afterword and his younger sister adorned the cover and texts with illustrations. Early next year his sister presented it to Keats House at Hampstead during her trip to England.

In March 2001, following his doctor's advice, he retired from Showa Women's University. He delivered a farewell lecture "*Man'yōshū*, Old English Poetry and I", in which he drew a parallel between the transitoriness of life sung in a Japanese poem and *The Seafarer* and his unsettled life in his youth. He quoted from J. R. R. Tolkien's valedictory address the passage: "The right and natural sense of Language includes Literature, just as Literature includes the study of the language of literary works. . . . the *central* (central if not sole) business of Philology in the Oxford School is the study of the language of *literary* texts, or of those that illuminate the history of the English literary language" (Mary Salu and Robert T. Farrell, eds. *J. R. R. Tolkien: Scholar and Storyteller*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1979. 26). He said that the same had been his business as a student and a teacher of English during half a century.

In 2003 he collected what he had written for wider audiences into a single book entitled *An Invitation to Philology* (Ono 2003). He also wrote a paper "Old English and Anglo-Saxon England in History" (*Gakuen* 752, Showa Women's University,

2003: 178-188) [in Japanese].

In 2004 he read a paper "A Historical Consideration of Standard English – with Special Reference to Standard Old English" at the 21st General Meeting of Modern English Society, and chaired a symposium "Anglo-Saxon in History" at the 76th General Meeting of the English Literary Society of Japan.

In 2008 he published *English in History* (Ono 2008). It includes his chronologically arranged studies on Old English, William Barnes, Thomas Hardy, and American English.

In 2013, a year before his death, at the end of "English and I," he quoted C. S. Lewis, Bruce Mitchell, and Fred C. Robinson and insisted on the importance of philology. It is a discipline that aims to understand the past culture through language, in which the study of language is not divorced from the study of literature, history or law, and intensive reading is an essential element.

He died on September 10th, 2014 at the age of 83. There is an obituary written in Japanese by Hiroshi Ogawa in *MES Japan News* No. 61 (2015) 16-17.