

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

JEFFREY P. MASS

(1940-2001)

Jeffrey P. Mass, Yamato Ichihashi Professor of Japanese History and Civilization, died at Stanford University Hospital on March 30, 2001, at the age of sixty. Widely recognized as the leading American scholar of medieval Japanese history, he transformed the field not only through his own work but also through devoted mentoring of a younger generation of scholars, including his own numerous students.

Jeff Mass developed his interest in East Asian history during his undergraduate years at Hamilton College, where he earned a B.A. in 1962. After a stint teaching English in Japan—and a short-lived career in radio—he returned to the U.S. to pursue a doctorate at Yale University under Professor John W. Hall. Doctoral research took him to Tokyo University, where he became the first foreign student to undergo a rigorous apprenticeship in reading primary documents from the medieval era. He confided to a fellow student that he planned to publish ten books in the course of his career; remarkably, he did.

At Stanford, where Mass joined the faculty as an assistant professor in 1973, his passion for documents would become legendary. Over the years, his medieval documents seminar would serve as a cornerstone of Stanford's East Asian history program. Sustained dedication to archival research, and to intensive primary-source tutoring, allowed Mass to transform his field. His own work made use of a wide range of materials, including administrative decrees, wills, land transfer documents, and diaries. His first book, *Warrior Government in Early Medieval Japan: A Study of the Kamakura Bakufu, Shgo and Jito* (1974), challenged conventional wisdom about the founding of the Kamakura government and established Mass as a leader in the field. Over the next twenty-five years, he would publish five more monographs on Kamakura institutional and legal history, edit two conference volumes, and publish numerous articles and book reviews. Without question he was the most prolific scholar in his field. At the same time, he rigorously trained and devotedly nurtured a cohort of graduate students who have since gone on to dominate the Western-language field of medieval Japanese history.

In 1987, Mass was appointed a visiting professor of Japanese history at Oxford University, where he was affiliated with Hertford College. He spent

many happy springs and summers in Oxford, pursuing his research and writing agenda as well as participating in the training of English students in his field. During those visits he developed a keen interest in medieval English coinage, a subject on which he eventually established himself as an authority. Before his death, he became the first American member of the British Numismatics Society; a posthumous monograph on *The English Short Cross Coinage, 1180-1247* (Cambridge, 2001) attests to his love and mastery of what he called “pennies of the Kamakura period.’

While Jeff Mass devoted his energies primarily to teaching and scholarship, he also served the scholarly community in other capacities. Most notably, in 1995 he stepped in as executive director of the Inter-University Center for Advanced Language Studies at Yokohama, the premier center for advanced language training for Western-language students in Japan. He also served on the advisory boards of the *Journal of Japanese Studies* and *Japan Forum*.

In recognition of his contribution to the development of medieval Japanese Studies in Europe, Jeff Mass was made an Honorary Fellow of Hertford College in March 2001. After his death, Mass’s former students gathered at Stanford in May, 2001, to convene a symposium in his honor, on the theme of “Reconstructing Medieval Japan.” In June of the same year, his alma mater, Hamilton College, awarded him a posthumous honorary degree.

Jeffrey Mass’s untimely death deprived the field and the campus of an outstanding scholar and colleague. His leadership, integrity, and passionate dedication both to teaching and to primary research have left a profound and lasting mark on his field. He is sorely missed.

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