Obituary

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Farewell to Tsumagari Toshirō

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FIGURE 1 Professor Tsumagari Toshirō on April 4, 2017
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ὃς δὲ θεοὶ φίλουςιν ἀπαθνήσκει νέος

The one whom the Gods love, dies young

Ancient Greek proverb

• • •

人まろなくなりになれどうたのこととどまれるかな

Although Hitomaro has passed away, his poems remain!

KI-NO TSURAYUKI, Kana preface to the 『古今和歌集』

[A Collection of Old and New Japanese Poems], 921 AD

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On November 7, 2020 Prof. Tsumagari Toshirō 津曲敏郎 (1951–2020), the renowned Japanese Tungusologist, took his last trip, from which there is no return. He was taken from us by a short but devastating illness at the too young age of sixty-eight and at the height of his scholarly career. He is survived by his wife Mayumi. The couple has no children, but a scholar is judged by the posterity on the basis of the scholarly fruits of his/her life: the results of research and students that s/he trained. In both cases, as we will outline below, the results are exceptional.

Prof. Tsumagari was born on November 30, 1951 in then Kokura city (now merged with Kitakyūshū city) in Fukuoka prefecture on the island of Kyūshū, which is located on the other end of Japan from the island of Hokkaidō, which was destined to become his home for half a century from 1970, when he entered the Hokkaidō University as a student and until his untimely passing last year. Prof. Tsumagari met there his mentor and teacher, late Professor Ikegami Jirō (1920–2011) in 1971. He started his scholarly career by studying the Manchu language and its philology under Prof. Ikegami's tutelage. As a matter of fact, Prof. Tsumagari's introduction to the Manchu language (Tsumagari 2002a) remains the best and unsurpassed, and indispensable for any serious student of Manchu. As one of the co-authors of this obituary noted in his review of this nice little book, the English translation of Prof. Tsumagari's introduction to the Manchu Language remains a high desideratum in this field (Vovin 2004: 318). This book has several advantages over Li (2010) or completely useless Gorelova (2002), not only in its wide and varied selection of texts, but also by paying

attention to the most intricate details of the Manchu grammar, such as the distinction between the genitive form ᡤᡳᡵᡳ *ere-i* of the demonstrative pronoun ᡤᡳᡵᡳ *ere* ‘this’ and its instrumental form ᡤᡳᡵᡳᡳᡤᡳ *ere-ni* (Tsumagari 2002a: 40). Needless to say, this introduction is not the only imprint that Prof. Tsumagari left on the Manchu studies (Tsumagari 1980a, 1981, 1983a, 1987b, 1992b, 2001b, 2006a).

However, Prof. Tsumagari’s contributions to the field of Tungusic linguistics are not limited to the Manchu language. He was also introduced by Prof. Ikegami to the Uilta (Orok) language, and Prof. Tsumagari worked as a student assistant for the latter, helping to collect materials for the description and documentation of the Uilta language. Throughout 1970s he worked with some Uilta native speakers who had migrated from Sakhalin (in Japanese *Karafuto* 樺太) to Hokkaidō after World War II, and learned the Uilta language to such an extent that he became able to write in Uilta (see Tsumagari 2015a). Furthermore, he examined in detail the previous grammatical descriptions of the Uilta language outside Japan in the 1980s (Tsumagari 1980b, 1987a). But this was far from the end, as well witnessed by his bibliography (appended to this obituary), as Prof. Tsumagari continued his research on Manchu and Uilta and also engaged in the study of other Tungusic languages, such as Ewenki, Solon, Nanai, and especially Udihe. Some publications on Ewenki: Tsumagari 1992c, Chaoke 1995; on Solon: Chaoke et al. 1991, Tsumagari 2009a; and on Nanai: Kile 1993, Tsumagari 1991.

In a sense, Prof. Tsumagari’s work on the Udihe language with A. A. Kanchuga, a native Udihe speaker of Bikin dialect from 1996 was one of his most important achievements in Tungusic linguistics. This fieldwork resulted in a series of important publications (Tsumagari (ed.) 2001a, 2002b, 2003a, 2004a, 2005a, 2006bc, 2007a, 2009b, 2010ab, 2013, 2014a, 2015b, 2016) and some articles (Tsumagari 2011, 2012). He was not a stranger to the Mongolian linguistics, either, having done some important work on the Dagur language (Tsumagari 1985, 2003b). His extensive research has contributed significantly to areal-typological studies (Tsumagari 1990, 1992d, 1993, 1996, 1997, 2003c), which have inspired younger researchers until now.

We now turn to the brief history of Prof. Tsumagari’s academic career. After graduating in 1974 from the Faculty of Letters at the Hokkaidō University and obtaining the MA Degree in Linguistics from the same University in 1976, Prof. Tsumagari was first employed as an Assistant in the Department of Linguistics of at the same University in 1977–1988, before becoming an Assistant Professor at the Otaru University of Commerce (1988–1991) and then an Assistant Professor and Professor of the Center for Language Studies at the Otaru University (1991–1998), before being re-employed by the Hokkaidō University first as a Professor of the Faculty of Letters (Chair of Northern

Culture Studies, 1998–2000), and then as a Professor of the Graduate School of Letters at the same University (2000–2015) before his obligatory retirement. But even after his retirement in 2015 he became a Specially Appointed Professor of the Graduate School of Letters at the Hokkaidō University (2015–2017), and then in 2017 until his demise in 2020 the Director of the Hokkaidō Museum of Northern Peoples in Abashiri, which although originally conceived as an Ainu museum, became all-inclusive Museum of Northern Peoples.

Prof. Tsumagari has also trained several generations of graduate students, who have now become teachers and researchers: Nagayama Yukari (Associate Professor, Kushiro Public University of Economics), Yamakoshi Yasuhiro (Associate Professor, Tokyō University of Foreign Studies), Yamada Atsushi (Professor, Japan Healthcare University), Baek Sangyub (Associate Professor, Muroran Institute of Technology), Yazaki Haruna (Research and Curatorial Fellow, National Ainu Museum, Shiraoi), and Yamada Yoshiko (Assistant Curator, Hokkaidō Museum of Northern Peoples).

We would like to conclude this obituary with some personal reminiscences of Prof. Tsumagari and his kindness.

From the American co-author: we first met almost by a pure chance in Beijing in 1998 or 1999. It so happened that I was meeting with a Solon scholar Cháo Kè (朝克, also simply Chaoke) on that day, and he invited me to meet his Japanese friend. I think you can easily guess who that friend was. Somehow Cháo Kè avoided mentioning our names (I think now it was a part of the surprise he planned all along), so we had to start quite an amicable conversation without knowing who is who. After some five minutes or so, the Japanese friend of Cháo Kè looked at me with a big grin on his face and asked: Vovin-sensei? Then it dawned on me, too, and I reciprocated with: Tsumagari-sensei? The contact was firmly established at this very moment and firmly cemented with the enormous quantity of Chinese *jiǔ* (酒). In 2001, while working on a Japanological project at the International Center for Japanese Studies (*Kokusai Nihon bunka kenkyū sentā* 国際日本文化研究センター) in Kyōto, I came to the Hokkaidō University by the invitation of Prof. Tsumagari, where he kindly introduced me to Ikegami Jirō, Kirikae Hideo, Satō Tomomi, as well as to a number of his students. Surprisingly enough, I also met through him on this trip some scholars from my country of birth: Anna Bugaeva, who became a dear family friend from this time, and Aleksandr Pevnov with his now late first wife Mariia Khasanova. Prof. Tsumagari and his wife Mayumi have also entertained me at their home in Sapporo. Unfortunately, the second time we met face to face was destined to become the last one – it was in Honolulu in 2007 or 2008, where Tsumagari-sensei and Mayumi-san came for a vacation. I can only hope that I myself and my wife Sambi were able to reciprocate their kindness.

Two other co-editors of the *International Journal of Eurasian Linguistics* have also fond memories of Prof. Tsumagari. Juha Janhunen recollects that he was treated very kindly by Prof. Tsumagari while he was a young visiting researcher at the Hokkaidō University, and José Andrés Alonso de la Fuente told me that Prof. Tsumagari assisted him in whatever capacity he could, that being getting books from Japan or solving intricate grammatical problems in Dagur, Uilta and even Ainu.

From the Japanese co-author: Our relationship began in 2005, when I asked him for a guidance of my BA graduation thesis at the Hokkaidō University. He advised me to do research on the texts of the Uilta folklore (Ikegami 2002; later a Russian version was published as Tsumagari (ed.) 2007c). It did not take long before I got immersed in the study of the Uilta language under his tutelage. I visited him whenever I found something interesting. He always looked very happy to welcome my visits and read everything I wrote with pleasure. Now that I think about it, Prof. Tsumagari was the major driving force for my research. Besides, he deeply respected his supervisor, Prof. Ikegami Jirō, and loved to introduce his works. Tsumagari (2009c, 2010c, 2014b, 2014c) are written following Prof. Ikegami's studies of the Uilta language. An ultimate expression of his respect and affection for Prof. Ikegami was the symposium he held to celebrate the latter's 88th birthday (米寿) in 2008 (the proceedings were published as Tsumagari (ed.) 2009d). I have never been taught directly by Prof. Ikegami, but I think that I inherited a part of the deep respect to him. This also motivates me to continue their work.

I would like to introduce the following two points of Prof. Tsumagari's late-life efforts. First, he tried very hard to support younger generation of scholars in the studies of the northern languages. After the last issue of 『環北太平洋の言語』 [*Languages of the North Pacific Rim*], which he was either editing or co-editing (Miyaoaka and Tsumagari 1997, Tsumagari 2001c, 2002c, 2003d, 2004b, 2005b, 2006d, 2007b), there was no serial publication to publish the research on the languages of the North. In 2011 he organized Network for Northern Language Studies in collaboration with Prof. Kurebito Megumi (University of Toyama), and established the new series of a linguistic journal 『北方言語研究』 [*Northern Language Studies*] (Network for Northern Language Studies (ed.) 2011–2017). Even after his retirement, Prof. Tsumagari continued his endeavors. The Japan Association of Northern Language Studies (JaNoLS) was established in 2018, with Prof. Tsumagari as one of its co-founders. The above-mentioned journal is now published by JaNoLS. He supported them as an advisor up until his untimely passing.

Second, he played an important role as a museum director in his later years. A turning point was the unexpected appointment as the director of

the Hokkaidō University Museum in 2011. It is a position concurrent to one's appointment as a professor, and the successful candidate is elected from the professors at the university with a 4-year term. I remember that he seemed to be a little confused in the beginning, but finally Prof. Tsumagari began to grasp what he could do as a linguist. He created a key phrase "objects, words, and people" for the museum activities including various fields of academic study. His simple words united the complex museum organization and made it more open to society. In addition, his innate hospitality made him active in international exchange. Such an experience led to the invitation to become a director of the Hokkaidō Museum of Northern Peoples, where I have worked since 2011, after his retirement from the university in 2017. Prof. Tsumagari was consistently modest, trying to get to know the museum by doing the kind of an unspectacular but necessary work, for example, organizing materials he donated (Tsumagari 2018). From my point of view, he thought himself it was just a start, and never expected it to be over in less than 4 years.

Prof. Tsumagari prepared his collection of works for the press when he was bedridden due to his illness. He named the book 「北のモノ・コト・ヒト: ことばと博物館の出会い」 [Objects, words, and people of the North: An encounter of languages with museums]. His close friends and some of his students are engaged in its edition at the present time. They are planning to publish it by the end of 2021.

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